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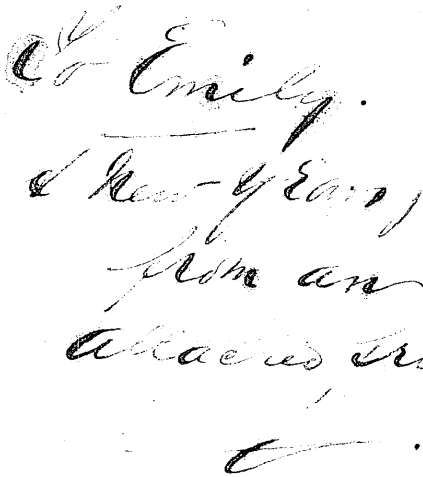

THE CATHOLIC OFFERING.

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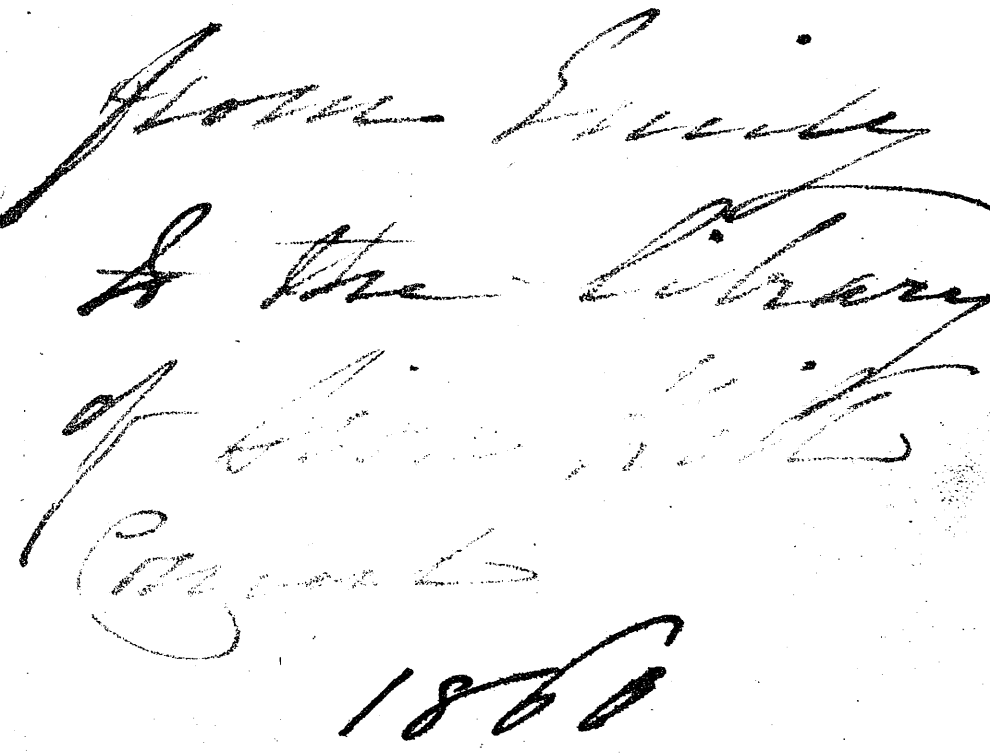


"Novels, as a class, present false views of life; and as it is the error of the young to mistake these for realities, they become the dupes of their own ardent and enthusiastic imaginations, which, instead of trying to control and regulate, they actually strengthen and nourish with the poisonous food of phantoms and chimeras."—p. 149.

THE

Catholic Offering;

COUNSELS TO THE YOUNG

ON THEIR LEAVING SCHOOL

AND

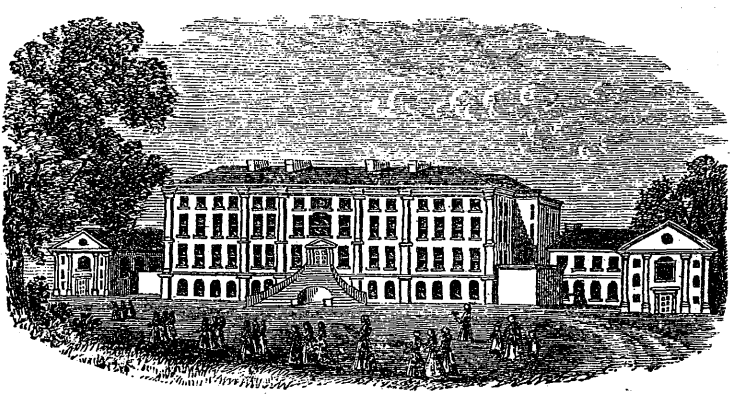
ENTERING INTO THE WORLD.

BY A MEMBER OF THE URSULINE COMMUNITY,

Black Rock, Cork.

AUTHORESS OF "THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER," "THE MONTH OF MARY," "LOVE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD," "LENTEN MONITOR," ETC., ETC.

"Be thou faithful until death."—Apoc. ii. 10.



DUBLIN:

JAMES DUFFY, 7, WELLINGTON-QUAY.

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TO THE

Most Holy and Adorable Heart of Jesus,

THIS

LITTLE BOOK IS HUMBLY CONSECRATED

IN REPARATION,

THANKSGIVING, AND LOVE.

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INTRODUCTION.

THAT a religious education is among the most precious of God's gifts to us, no reflecting mind can doubt;—yet, while experience and observation daily concur in bearing testimony to the multiplied blessings of which it is the source, the same wise teachers unhappily point to but too many instances in which the grace has been rendered partially or wholly fruitless by want of due co-operation.—If the maxims of practical piety so constantly inculcated in convent years are forgotten;—the precautions against the world's evil influences, so frequently recommended, neglected;—the principles of duty so perpetually instilled, laid aside;—then will the object of religious training clearly be defeated, and the blessing of a Christian education rendered abortive;—then will many a fair promise be crushed in the budding, and many a high and holy purpose blighted, before it has had time to reach maturity.

The object of the following little book is to place before the young and inexperienced, at the important and critical period of their departure from school, an abstract of the lessons which formed the habitual subject of the teaching of their early guides, that occasional recurrence to its pages may keep the memory of those lessons alive in the heart, and the warning voice of the silent monitor either recal better resolutions, should they have been swerved from, or stimulate to perseverance if the narrow road is still happily that preferred.

May it through God's goodness prove the means of reviving, in even one unfaithful heart, the pious emotions of holier years, or of encouraging even one true child of God to steady fidelity in his service, and may the divine blessing so frequently invoked in its progress, descend on it now, and abide with the reader and writer for ever!

THE

CATHOLIC OFFERING.

CHAPTER I.

HAPPINESS, THE GREAT OBJECT OF MAN'S DESIRES. GOD ITS ONLY SOURCE.

HAPPINESS is the one absorbing object of man's desires—the end of his pursuits—the stimulus to his exertions—the term of his aspirations—the anticipated haven of his rest—his waking dream and his sleeping vision. Varied as may be the occupations which engross his days, diversified the scenes of his chequered existence, fluctuating the impulses of his restless heart, in one respect he is ever constant, to one occupation ever devoted, to one impulse ever true. Through all the vicissitudes of the external universe, and all the mutations of the interior world of thought and feeling, still is his aim the same; still are his eyes riveted with never-tiring gaze on the fair vision of perspective happiness; still does fancy keep hovering round the flitting phantom, and hope whispering that, perhaps, after all,

men err in calling it a phantom, and that a little more time and a little more pains were well worth expending in the effort to grasp at last its tangible reality. And so life goes on—all competing for the prize, but few attaining it; all running in the race, but few reaching the goal; because, though all pursue the same end, all, unfortunately, do not take the one and only path that leads to it.

And where is that path? Happiness, it is said, dwells somewhere, but in what region shall it be sought? What propitious star points out the far off shore to which its golden wings have borne it? "Who hath gone up into heaven, and taken it, and brought it down from the clouds? Who hath passed over the sea, and found it," and made for it a tabernacle of rest, and where? (Baruch, iii. 29, 30) As long as this question remains unanswered, and the road to happiness unknown, the only course open to the anxious inquirer, is to explore on chance the path that looks most promising, in the vague hope that it may perhaps prove the right one.

In accordance with this conclusion he determines to try that which leads to riches, as apparently the most level and secure, and so sets forward on his way.

Years flow on in the accomplishment of the

journey—the young, joyous years of vigorous health, enthusiastic anticipation, and abounding energy. They are spent in toil, it is true, and dimmed by passing shadows of doubt as to ultimate success; but the soul's sunshine is yet too powerful to vanish at the lowering of a cloud, and its hopes too strong to fade before a mere possibility of disappointment. Mature age succeeds in time to buoyant youth, deepening the shadows, yet bringing no relaxation in the toil; but at last life's autumn comes, and with it the long desired hour which is to indemnify the patient traveller for all his pains and privations. His journey is completed; his term attained. Riches are realized; distinction, consideration, self-indulgence, have followed in their train; every wish is gratified; every want, nay, every caprice anticipated. Has he not now found happiness, and is he not therefore satisfied? Alas! far from it. Wealth he has amassed, but the happiness he fondly deemed identical with it has eluded his grasp; and as he wearily gazes on its dim, distant shadow, he begins to question whether that shadow is not indeed a creation of his own imagination rather than the reflection of a reality; whether happiness is not a phantom possessed only of the ideal existence conferred by the yearnings of the empty heart which vainly sought to enfold it in its embrace. Verily,

for that deluded spirit, it has none other! Happiness lies not buried under mountains of gold, nor does it sparkle in the diamond's lustre, nor nestle in beds of roses, nor smile from amidst fairy scenes of earthly grandeur, nor sleep enfolded in the mantle of royalty, nor mingle its music with the song of noisy mirth, nor blend its accents with the shouts of boisterous revelry, nor build its home within the magic circle of exciting pleasure; wealth cannot purchase it, nor any of wealth's attendant enjoyments confer it.

Neither is it hidden in the mines of learning, which to some other weary wanderer seem to enclose the treasure. He may explore them patiently to the depths, never faltering by day, never fainting by night. He may work his way through all the mazes of the labyrinth—now groping in darkness, now advancing boldly in a momentary gleam of light. His labours may be finally rewarded by the satisfactory solution of some abstruse problem—the revelation of some secret hitherto veiled from human genius. He may find himself on the very pinnacle of the temple of science, and thence gaze exultingly on the multitude who crowd to pay homage to the power of mind; but does the gem of happiness glitter in the crown of intellectual pre-eminence awarded him by his fellow men? Alas, no! He

has not discovered happiness in the sun, which he has balanced; nor in the moon, which he has measured; nor in the stars, among which he has rambled; nor in the sea, which he has sounded. The sweet flowers have not imparted it, although he has catalogued their varieties; nor the warbling birds, although he has classified their species; nor the bright butterfly, although he can describe its transformations; nor any of the tribes of nature, although he can discuss their habits and enumerate their characteristic features. The secrets of nature he has discovered, but the secret of peace is still impenetrable; the wonders of all other sciences he has looked at face to face, but of the science of true content he is in utter ignorance.

If happiness is allied neither with the attainment of profound science, nor with the renown which men attach to its possession, perhaps it may be found in political eminence, in lofty station, in superior authority, and commanding influence? No; the realization of ambition's wildest imaginings cannot confer peace of soul; the attainment of the highest dignities cannot still the restless throbbings of the heart; the success of the most brilliant worldly speculation cannot repress its sighs, nor the possession of the universe replenish the void within it. The gratification of one desire is but the awakening of

another; the accomplishment of one enterprise the signal for embarking in a new. What seemed at first the term of the journey, is found on a nearer view to be no more than its commencement, just as in our childish days we fancied we should quite easily lay our hands on the clear sky, could we by any process reach the opposite mountains, which seemed to hide their heads in its blue depths, and wondered much to hear that if transported to those mountain summits we should find the sky as much beyond our reach as ever; looking as if it had lifted its transparent canopy still higher into the fields of space, in pure ridicule of our simple credulity. "I said in my heart, I will go and abound with delights, and enjoy good things. And I saw that this also was vanity. I heaped together for myself silver and gold, ... and I surpassed in wealth all that were before me: my wisdom also remained with me. And whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not. And I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared; and esteemed this my portion to make use of my own labour. And when I turned myself to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labours wherewith I had laboured in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind, and that nothing under the sun was lasting," or

capable of imparting true peace (Eccl. ii. 1, 8, 9, 10, 11).

If happiness is not in wealth nor in pleasure, nor in fame, nor in learning, nor in gratified ambition, nor in any earthly pursuit, where then is it? Does it really exist, or is the radiant form so often portrayed in our day-dreams, a mere delusion of over wrought fancy? its bright smile, an airy vision? its gentle promises, a cruel mockery? No, surely. . . . In the ceaseless yearning of the heart for happiness, we recognise an instinct emanating from Him, who when He formed our immortal souls to His own likeness endowed them with each of their varied faculties and feelings; and as we know by faith that God does nothing in vain, but destines each of His works for an appointed end, we may reasonably conclude that the inherent desire of peace implanted by His hand must admit of realization; that long cherished hope will ultimately be absorbed in fruition, and the panting spirit be permitted at last to fold its fluttering wings, and find repose.

We must not, however, confound happiness with frivolous gaiety, or fictitious excitement, or thoughtless levity, or mere natural buoyancy of spirit. Happiness, in the true and holy sense of the word—that in which alone we now consider it, is something far too sacred, too deeply seated,

too beautifully calm, too solidly permanent, to claim kindred with the empty, superficial, evanescent emotions of worldly joy. Were we, like the world, to dignify those emotions with the name of happiness, like the world, too, we might be tempted to substitute the figure for the reality, and to pursue the shadow for the substance; but knowing from the declaration of Christ Himself, that the peace He bequeathed to His disciples was not as the peace which the world gives, we at one glance discern that there never can be any connexion between the two, and that the paths leading to each must therefore be diametrically opposite.

God assuredly destines us for happiness, but a happiness based solely on a supernatural foundation; the world's mistake is, that building on an earthly one, the edifice totters and crumbles sooner or later with the frail prop on which it rests. God destines us for happiness, but a happiness to be realized only through union with Himself; the world's error again is, that seeking peace in everything but God, it finds the bending reed on which it leant to break at last, and discovers too late that the support it clung to was hollow as the hopes which reposed on it. God, the exhaustless source of the bliss of saints and angels, invites us to plunge boldly into the ocean, and drink freely at the fountain, instead

of hollowing for ourselves broken cisterns that contain too little water to refresh the fevered soul, and He has decreed that on our compliance with, or rejection of, His loving invitation depends our happiness or misery in this life and in the next. In selecting as our path to happiness the path that leads to God, we need dread neither illusion nor disappointment; for He, the infallible Truth, is our security, that so surely as happiness will ever elude the grasp of those who seek it out of Him, so surely will it be found by all who seek it in Him.

We must not however imagine that the road to God and to happiness, is necessarily a road abounding only in delights. If true happiness is not to be confounded with the wild delirium of worldly pleasure, neither is it to be supposed identical with a total exemption from suffering. This is the happiness of which the world dreams, but not that which forms the subject of the Christian's aspirations. Knowing that the royal way of the cross is the only way to the kingdom of heaven, the disciple of Christ rather rejoices than repines at the transient tribulations, in which he recognises so many helps for reaching the goal towards which his steps are ever bent, as his desires are ever directed. Taught by faith that "the souls of the just are in the hands of God," (Wisd. iii. 1,) even

at the very time when "evils happen to them as though they had done the works of the wicked," (Eccl. viii. 14,) he concludes that those apparent evils must necessarily be real blessings; consequently, when such fall to his own lot, he accepts and embraces them as precious pledges of the watchful love and solicitude of his heavenly Father, and even while nature writhes under the infliction, exclaims with his heart still more than with his lips, "It is good for me, O Lord, that thou hast humbled me!" (Ps. cxviii. 71.)

Identifying his happiness absolutely and solely with the possession of his God, he is sustained under every misfortune, by the invigorating thought, that no temporal calamity, however overwhelming, can deprive his soul of this, its only Good; and he feels that heavily as sorrow may press on him, it cannot be called an unmitigated evil, while he is blessed in the enjoyment of God's friendship, and rich in the possession of his grace. That heavenly Master, who never permits himself to be outdone in liberality, will reward the struggles of his generous servant just in proportion to the noble constancy with which they have been sustained, descending with him even into the fiery furnace of tribulation, and there opening to him sweet sources of supernatural comfort, whence he may drink at

will to refresh his soul, and strengthen his resolution. Is it indeed nothing in the hour of trial to be allowed recourse to God, the sovereign Consoler? Is it nothing to raise the drooping eye to the holy mountain, and invoke the fortitude which, commingled with the blood of the Man of sorrows, flows from its height as a rapid river? Nothing to rest the aching brow against the cross on which once wildly throbbed a bursting head pierced through with thorns? Nothing to deposit the burden of care in the broken heart of the meek Sufferer of Calvary, and unite the bitterness of humiliation with the gall which burned His lips, and the mockery that pierced His soul? Nothing to drown the sense of loneliness and bereavement in the sea of desolation that engulfed his spirit, and bear away in the heart's depths the memory of his last tear of agony, and his dying glance of love? Nothing, when the frame is spent, and the steps are slow, to think of Him who toiled so ceaselessly in the pursuit of His wandering flock, and dragged His weary feet so painfully up the hill of ignominy on the day of the crucifixion? Oh! these are solid comforts, which only God can give, and none but those who love God can know; and since experience teaches that suffering is, to a greater or less extent, the lot of all men, we cannot but conclude, that those are happiest even in this world, who seek-

ing their happiness in God alone, find their grief alleviated by the sweetness of His presence, and the weight of their sorrows diminished by their tranquil submission to the all-wise and all-loving dispensations of His providence.

There are times, it is true, when the spirit seems utterly crushed by trial; its elasticity broken; its energies paralyzed; its perceptions so dulled and blunted, that it can no longer grasp the motives of comfort which religion supplies, or even realise the idea that once it had known, because it had tasted, that the Lord is very sweet, and his service very consoling. Yet, even then, amidst that dreary night of the soul, one beam from heaven will work its way; one solace will come, in the thought that at least God is supremely happy, and that, incomprehensible as it seems, there exists at this moment a region where all are happy; where the answer to earth's groans is the everlasting alleluia of angels, and the echo to earth's wailing the triumphant canticle of saints. Hope points to that region as the true term of the Christian's desires; faith tells him that the happiness which God has promised his servants, although to a certain extent foreshadowed in this life, is not destined to receive its consummation until the next, and raising his tearful eyes and heavy heart to the bright home above, he renews his courage,

resumes his journey, and resigns himself to wait for the full realization of the divine promise, until the hour when every tear shall be wiped away, and every pang assuaged.

The soul devoted to God must be prepared to contend against domestic enemies, as well as to encounter external trials. In her, as in the worldly heart, perverse propensities will assert their claims, and passion clamour for indulgence. Temptation will spring from the heart's native corruption, and snares will be laid for it by its mortal foe,—but ever true to God,—ever consistent in seeking its happiness in the fulfilment of His holy will alone,—it renounces its dearest inclinations, when at variance with His law, and learns from sweet experience that there is more real, soul-soothing consolation in the most difficult sacrifices, than in the full indulgence of every vicious tendency and the free gratification of every sinful impulse. Calmly happy in the testimony of a good conscience, it feels and owns that were no other recompense attached to God's service than that of emancipation from the wretched slavery of passion and self-love, it would be in itself a rich indemnification for the temporary pains endured in casting off the fetters of tyrants so insatiable and pitiless. "There is no pleasure above the joy of the heart," (Eccl. xxx. 16); but joy cannot breathe in the

atmosphere of passion, consequently the subjection of passion leads to happiness, and as the service of God rightly understood demands that subjection, in his service, again, alone is happiness.

And so, pursuing our investigations through life's varied scenes and unnumbered vicissitudes, and observing the opposite influence of its alternations on the worldly mind and the Christian heart, we shall come to the conclusion, again and again, as each new subject of reflection is developed, that even in this world, happiness, as far as it is attainable, belongs by exclusive right to those who seek it in the service and the love of God, and flits before the eyes of the world's slaves, only to tantalize them by its taunting smile, and then take to itself the wings of the dove and fly away to its rest,—the Christian spirit. "God hath given to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy; but to the sinner he hath given vexation, and superfluous cares." (Eccl. ii. 26).

The period of leaving school, at which you have now arrived, is an especially critical and important epoch in life. The restraints to which you have for some years been wisely subjected, are about to be removed, and the first taste of that freedom is full of peril. The simple pleasures of early days are on the eve of being

exchanged for the more exciting but less innocent amusements of the world, and on the first awakening to the contrast, depend momentous results. The desire of happiness which you share in common with the rest of men will ere long burst into new life and activity, and on the nature of the measures adopted for its realization your eternity may be said to hang. The paths to happiness explored by the world's older worshippers are not those likely to attract you in your young light-heartedness; but if the road of riches and of fame offer you no allurements, it is to be feared the ways of pleasure will. Deeming liberty the source of untold joys, and the sunny world the very fountain-spring and well of bliss, you may perhaps seek in the free indulgence of the one, and the unlimited enjoyment of the other, that happiness for which, like the rest of mortals, you eagerly pant. But what matters it whether the spirit be bound to earth by a golden chain, a leaden fetter, or a silken thread? So long as it is enslaved, so long is it powerless to soar to God, and so long therefore will its hopes of peace be frustrated. If it be true of the world at large, that this earth cannot confer real happiness, how much more true is it of those, who like you, have known the gift of heaven, and tasted its sweetness; who have been fostered under the wings of God's providence, and passed years

under the shadow of His tabernacle; who have been carefully instructed in His law, and deeply impressed with the great fundamental truths of faith; who have so often seen, as in a mirror, the shade of the eternal years, and watched it extending, deepening, darkening; until, at last, it not only overspread, but absolutely absorbed, nay effaced that world which now glitters so invitingly, only because viewed through a different medium? For persons trained to serious reflection, and formed to solid piety as you have been, it were indeed vain to seek happiness out of God. They may try to find it elsewhere, but they never can succeed. They may plunge bravely into the vortex of dissipation, but only to find the grave of their hopes, and perhaps the death of their souls. They may endeavour to discover, by a personal test, whether happiness is not co-existent with constant self-indulgence, but the attempt will end in discomfiture, and their reluctant testimony blend, at last, with the far echoing voice which proclaims that the heart made for God, shall find its rest in God alone. "The rivulet parted from the sea," writes the Italian poet, "now bathes the fertile valley, now winds its way across the mountain's path, now traverses the rock-bound streamlet, now mingles its waters with the river's tide, but wheresoever its troubled pro-

gress leads it, still and ever does it moan over its separation from the ocean whence it derived its origin, and in whose bosom it hopes, after its weary wanderings, at last to find repose." Oh! how true to nature is this beautiful comparison, and how perfectly does it depict the condition of the human heart, seeking rest for ever, but finding none, until, like the wave from the ocean, it has returned to its home, the bosom of its God! There no disappointment awaits it; there no coldness will chill its ardours, no alarm ruffle its peace, no dread anticipation disturb its security, no repulse check its trustfulness. The bliss of heaven consists in the possession of God, and to the heart which possesses him here, heaven has already begun on earth. Sweet hymns of jubilee are ever rising from its depths, where lies a chord tuned to unison with that far resounding voice of universal nature, whence ever flows rich melody, inaudible to the indifferent listener, but clear as the bird's note to the ear of a heart refined and spiritualized by union of desire and affection with its Maker. To such a heart the bright sun brings gladness, for like all the works of creation it speaks of God. It reveals the love of Him who made it so glorious for the comfort of His creatures. It looks like a beam from the land which no sun illumines, because the Lord is its sun, and the Lamb that was slain, its lamp;

and thus it is converted into a spiritual medium of communication between that eternal home and the patient traveller to its gates, who derives new vigour for his journey from this partial glimpse of its happy term. The silvery moon, and the golden stars, and the lovely flowers, and all the varieties of nature's magnificence, which to the philosopher are objects merely of scientific observation, are to the soul which seeks but God, suggestive of thoughts of overflowing joy, speaking of the hour when it shall behold the Queen of Saints, fairer in her beauty than the moon which lies beneath her feet; crowned with her sparkling diadem of twelve stars, and enveloped in her flowing robes of never-fading light; and when it shall inhale the fragrance of odorous incense, wafted from angels' censers, before the everlasting throne; and when, instead of nature's beauties, the splendours of paradise will burst on it in their ever new variety, and ever dazzling glory. And even when the sun hides his head behind murky clouds, and the moon refuses to unveil her face to the night; when the smiles of nature are exchanged for frowns, and the freshness of earth's youth has yielded place to the wrinkles of her age; when howling winds have chased away soft breezes, and mounds of autumn leaves mark the tomb of summer roses; even here, in the very midst of gloom and desolation,

the heart at peace with God, still sings its sweet song, the song of Hope. It knows that mourning nature will throw off her sable garb in time, and the poverty stricken trees bend again beneath their burdens; that dark skies will put on their garment of blue, and faded meadows assume their robes of green; that cheerless winter will resign dominion, and beauteous summer reign, once more, a queen; and turning from the symbol to the reality, it swells with joy at the anticipation of another summer, the eternal summer, whose sun is ever cloudless, and whose skies are ever bright; whose fields are ever verdant, and whose flowers are ever blooming; and so, in the obscurity of dreary night, as in the glory of golden dawn, the heart's music flows on unchecked, and its lamp shines undimmed.

If after maturely weighing the comparative chances of happiness held out even in this brief existence, by the service of God and the service of the world, you have come to the conclusion that it is "religiousness" alone which "gives joy and gladness to the heart" (Eccl. ii. 18), will you not faithfully and steadily act on that conclusion in defiance of all temptations to the contrary? If, on the other hand, some hesitation as to its justice still linger around you, oh! beware of attempting a practical solution of your doubts, for thus would you too surely plunge into sin, and consequently

into misery. Beg for light to see all earthly things now, as they will appear on your dying bed. Believe on the word and experience of all who have made the trial, that the yoke of the Lord is light, and the chains of the world very weighty; that the narrow road of self-denial leads to peace, and the broad road of self-indulgence to anxiety and remorse; that "it is a sweet paradise even on earth to be with Jesus, and an anticipated hell to be without Him" (*Following of Christ*); and impressed with these convictions, resolve that in "the beautiful ways of wisdom" alone will you ever seek happiness, and in the paths of virtue, peace (Prov. iii. 17); and pray that neither the pleasures of the world, nor its reverses, "nor death nor life," nor joy nor sorrow, "nor things present, nor things to come, nor tribulation, nor distress, nor any creature, may ever have power to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39).

CHAPTER II.

FAITH, THE GUIDE TO GOD, AND THEREFORE THE CHRISTIAN'S FIRST TREASURE.

We have seen that all happiness, even here below, is in God, and have, it is to be hoped, fully admitted the truth of the great principle. In order, however, to realize in our own persons the happiness of which we believe the Almighty's service to be the only source, we must not confine ourselves to mere mental acquiescence in a truth which reason itself recognizes as incontrovertible, but proceeding from theory to practice, we must resolutely adopt for our path through life the path alone that leads to God, and having once adopted, steadily pursue it in defiance of all difficulties and impediments. Humble submission of mind to the doctrinal tenets of Faith, and firm adherence of will to its practical lessons, will not only open for us that blessed road, but guide us securely to its blissful term; for the more entirely mind and heart are subjected to God by Faith, the more perfectly also are the obstacles which pride and self-love oppose to union with Him removed—and union with God once attained, all of happiness that belongs to earth is realized.

Looking on our Faith as the heavenly beacon to guide us directly and most surely to God and happiness, we should, it is evident, value one ray of its light more than all the united treasures of earth, and in order to acquire due love and esteem for a gift so priceless, should make it a constant aim to render ourselves familiar by study and prayer, with all the reasons we have to cherish it. It may be that we have not hitherto prized as dearly as we ought, the familiar blessing of our Faith, precisely because it is familiar; yet should it not in truth acquire additional value in our eyes from the very fact that we have never known its want? Should we not love it the more, that it cost us nothing in the acquisition, but was bestowed with a munificence of generosity which so vastly enhances the magnificence of the favour? If we had hearts capable of appreciating the boundless goodness of God, what grateful love would warm them as reflection unfolds the divine liberality displayed in His gratuitous gift of our holy Faith! not merely in the gift itself, precious as it is, but also, and perhaps equally, in the manner of conferring it. We came into the world enemies of God, objects of His wrath, participators in His malediction, captives of Satan, aliens from heaven, heirs of hell — destitute, degraded, and powerless. A more entirely wretched and for-

lorn condition cannot surely be imagined. But the very magnitude of our misery excited the sympathy of our heavenly Father; its mute eloquence appealed strongly to His pity; its utter helplessness touched His heart, and yielding to the suggestions of compassion alone, He determined to remedy our evils with a prodigality of mercy nothing short of God-like. Calling on the infinite riches of His love, and the immense resources of His power, He commanded the mysterious waters of regeneration to flow, and lo! at their wonder-working touch, the hideous stain of original guilt disappeared; our sin-sullied souls were in a moment made pure as the spotless angels, and transformed from temples of the prince of darkness into sanctuaries of God's all Holy Spirit; the chains of our ignominious slavery were sundered, and our names but now inscribed on the list of the demon's trophies, transferred to the register of the adopted children of the Most High. Heaven's richest boon, our precious Faith, was granted us with our baptismal robe, long before we were capable of understanding its excellence, and the honour of membership with the Church conferred, ere we were even conscious of the privilege. Our infant heads reposed on the bosom of that holy Mother; our tottering steps were guided by pious parents to her temple; our little hands were clasped to

invoke her blessing; our baby lips were trained to lisp her worship, and with our advancing years we were initiated in her practices and taught the mystic meaning of her beautifully significant ceremonies. And so her saving faith grew with our growth, and strengthened with our strength; and when we were able at last to look around us, and take in at a comprehensive glance the divisions and subdivisions of the religious world, we found ourselves Catholics, without almost knowing how, until a little reflection showed us, that to God's great, gratuitous, and unbounded mercy we were indebted for a favour which as far exceeds the power of human language suitably to describe, as it surpasses the force of human gratitude adequately to feel.

Had the holy light been withheld until the mature years of existence, and come to us then, not as it played around our cradles—clear and bright as the heaven it came from; but fitful, glimmering, and uncertain — now steady for awhile, as the magi's star of old—now disappearing like the same celestial messenger, and leaving us to grope our way in darkness and perplexity; had it been revealed at last in its full effulgence, only to point the path to an agonising ordeal of suffering, and privation, and severing of sweet ties, and breaking up of home affections—all to be passed through before we

could " walk confidently in its rays," and advance boldly to our eternal country " in the brightness of its rising"—then, indeed, we should better comprehend the value of that Faith which it had cost us so much to attain; then we should esteem more highly the priceless pearl, to purchase which we had sold all we possessed, and deemed ourselves well repaid in the exchange. And if the invaluable gift has been imparted to us " without money and without price" (Is. lv. 1); if the treasure which others have sought through sleepless nights of prayer, and anxious days of enquiry, and amid agonies of uncertainty, and through mazes of bewilderment, has been laid at our feet before the eyes of our souls had cast their first glance on the wonders of the world of grace, or the voice of our hearts sung its first canticle of praise to the Author of those wonders; if the rich deposit for whose preservation multitudes have shed their blood, and endured every imaginable species of torture, has been confided to us without an attendant penalty or a previous conflict, should we not at least prove our esteem for it by locking it fast in our deepest hearts, inclosing it carefully within impregnable ramparts, loving it with our best affections, and looking on it as our first treasure!

We shall, perhaps, learn more fully to value our happiness as members of the true Church, if

we consider the spiritual condition of the multitudes for whom the day-star of Faith has never risen, and then contrast our own more favoured position with theirs. Casting our eyes first on the nations who "sit in the darkness" of idolatry, and are enveloped in the gloomy "shades of spiritual death" (St. Luke, i. 29), we find minds which the knowledge of God has never enlightened; hearts which His love has never softened; intelligent beings ignorant of their Creator's name; accountable beings restrained by no sense of moral responsibility; immortal beings closing a life of sin and misery by a death worthy rather of irrational animals than of reasonable creatures endowed with undying souls.

Turning from these benighted tribes to that more enlightened portion of the human race included within the pale of Christianity, but not of Catholicity, we find the knowledge of the true God prevalent, his dominion recognised, and his worship enforced; but we also discover an endless variety of views as to the true method of performing the solemn duties of that worship. We meet opposition of belief on the fundamental mysteries of faith, and hear varied expositions of its vital doctrines. We see mutable opinion substituted for fixed principle; man's fallacious judgment usurping the dominion of infallible authority, and the right of self-guidance estab-

lished as a fundamental rule; and knowing each of these to be a most sure and prolific source of division, we are quite prepared for the inconsistencies in theory, innovations in doctrine, and variations in practice which meet us on every side; quite ready to admit that diversity must necessarily constitute, as it invariably does, the prominent feature of the countless creeds of sectarians, and equally prompt to conclude that religion thus utterly bereft of fixed doctrines and steady principles, and resting wholly on a bewildering multiplicity of conflicting statements, can neither satisfy man's innate desire of peace, nor satiate his instinctive yearning for the one, undivided and indivisible Truth.

If in point of dogma, the Protestant religion cannot, as it is clear, impart, in any of its multiplied branches, that feeling of security so indispensable to the solidity and stability of faith, shall we find on farther enquiry, that its follower may look to it more successfully for direction in the practical details of his conduct, and guidance in the ways of Christian holiness? No, assuredly, for it professes to guide neither his practice nor his belief, but teaches him, that aided by the Bible alone, he can form for himself a code of morality, as well as a system of faith; adding that as mere belief in God will justify him equally at the last, whether his life has been

one of virtue or of vice, and a sterile faith in the merits of Christ save him, irrespectively of personal merits, it is more than needless to concern himself about the supererogatory, unavailing, inconvenient practices, styled good works. If, true to the beautiful instinct which impels the yet uncorrupted heart to love virtue for the sake of its own attractions, he perseveres in his first determination to take it to his soul, and make for it a kingdom there, whence shall he derive courage for the undertaking, even supposing him independent of the necessity of guidance or direction? Where shall he find strength to bear him unscathed through the struggles between his heavenward aspirations, and the human infirmity which drags him back to earth? Where shall he acquire fortitude to practise that death to self which lies at the basis of the perfection he fain would realize?

Again, not in his Church. It provides him no sacraments, offers for him no sacrifice; holds out no example of saints or intercession of angels; gives him no help, or comfort, or support in his need, but leaves him to combat and struggle, and suffer alone. Prayer, he has, no doubt, in common with all God's children, but how difficult it is to maintain the fervour of prayer, unassisted by the other means of grace which our beneficent Father in heaven has provided for his frail creatures on earth! How difficult to fix the mind on heavenly

things and resist the many influences which conspire to divert it from them, unless the stimulus of the external helps of religion be added to the resources which she internally supplies!

What a contrast between this picture and our own happy lot! Safely moored in the haven of Catholicity, we watch the waves of fluctuating religious opinion as they roll along, each bearing on its crest a fragment from some new wreck, and we feel that high as the billows may swell, and loud as the winds may roar, the vessel which bears us is proof against their violence, because fast chained to a rock—nay itself a rock—and we learn to love our holy religion with daily increasing warmth, because of the blissful sense of perfect security which it imparts.

We love it too, because it satisfies the yearning of our nature for truth, a yearning which, as the soul's own testimony proclaims, nothing short of truth can ever appease. Subtle argument may assume the rich ornaments of oratory, and sophistry attempt to disguise itself in the garb of reason; but as the truth is not in them, they can never content the heart; never feed it, or fill it, or silence it. So we see in the case of many, who not favoured like ourselves with early initiation in the truth, yet feeling its want and conscious that their own religion cannot supply it, pursue the invisible good with unremitting

ardour, until they discover it at last in the bosom of Catholicity, and there establish themselves to enjoy repose beneath its shade. The truth is in our holy Church, because the Spirit of Truth overshadows her with his wings and will abide ever in her heart's inmost core for ever. All her doctrines are true, and therefore inaccessible to doubt, or change, or cavil, or contradiction. They bear the most elaborate investigation, the closest criticism, and the deepest study, which, as truth lies at their basis, result only in a clearer revelation of their divine simplicity, their heavenly beauty, their perfect consistency, and admirable uniformity. The more minutely the Catholic searches into the grounds of his faith, the more distinctly is each feature of the magnificent whole revealed to his fascinated vision. The longer he gazes, the brighter grows the light; the deeper he excavates, the steadier become his steps. He feels he cannot stray while guided by the inextinguishable lamp of Truth lighted at the fires of the holy Catholic altars. He knows that submission to the authority of that Church over which the Paraclete is to preside for ever, will ensure him a share in the total exemption from error which has been from the beginning, and will be to the end her precious heritage, and, happy in the conviction, he abandons himself most confidently to her guidance,

gladly substituting her infallible wisdom for his own erring judgment, and casting away the frail reed of inconstant opinion, to lean instead on that firm "pillar of truth," (1 Tim. iii. 15,) which even "the gates of hell shall not prevail" to shake. (St. Matt. xvi. 18.)

These are strong grounds of attachment to our Holy Church, but they are not the only grounds. We love her, not alone because her doctrines fully satisfy the mind, but also because her practices and observances, at the same time, sweetly console the heart. Ours is not a religion merely of words, an abstract theory, a vain speculation, a cold ceremonial. It is a substantial reality. We can clasp our arms around it, and fold it to our hearts; we can warm ourselves at its fires, and bask in its sunshine; we can apply to it for strength in our weakness, and consolation in our woes; we can sleep tranquilly under its wings, and awake confidently in its smile. It is adapted, not by a fanciful fiction, but verily and indeed, to the nature of man, supplying all his wants, and remedying all his evils. Its sacraments nourish and strengthen him, maintaining the freshness and vigour of the soul's life, which, without their aid, would soon decay. A creature of sense, and, therefore, incapable of soaring to the contemplation of purely spiritual objects except through the medium of the senses, the

magnificence and solemnity of its glorious ceremonies impress him with feelings, which, for a time at least, decrease the force of earthly influences, and elevate his thoughts and desires to heaven. Its divine lessons raise him above himself, and inspire him with courage to shake the dust of the world's contagion from off his feet. They refine his mind, and exalt his views; purify his understanding, and soften his whole nature; so that, after having long studied, and faithfully practised them, he is transformed, as it were, into another being, an unearthly being, to whom virtue has become as the breath of his life, and religion, pure, beautiful, and undefiled as the atmosphere he inhales.

But, weak as we are by nature, and ever tending to the earth, it will happen that, though deeply enamoured of the divine beauty of virtue, and earnestly desirous to possess the treasure, many among us will be tempted to shrink from the difficulties which oppose its acquisition, and even sometimes to doubt how the sublime lessons of entire self-denial, profound humility, heroic charity, all-enduring patience, and total disengagement, which form the ordinary and ever-repeated teaching of the Church, can possibly apply to us, or such high perfection ever be realized in our persons. But the gentle accents of that loving mother fall on our desponding

hearts, as the genial sunbeam on the benumbed limbs of the paralysed—to invigorate and to cheer. She unfolds the records of her struggles; she points to page after page on which stand inscribed, in letters of light that looks like the light of glory, names, countless names, of Christian heroes and heroines, who, by the practice of those self-same lessons, became glorious saints; names, countless names, of brave martyrs, who, rather than act in opposition to those lessons, gave up their lives, and thought the loss a gain; names, countless names, of self-sacrificing victims, who, to avoid the mere risk of practically denying those life-giving maxims, fled from the world to bury themselves in the deep wilderness, and there passed their years in the exercise of uninterrupted prayer, and the practice of appalling penance. "And, aided by God's grace, cannot you do," she softly whispers, "what these have done, if not all, at least in part? Had not the saints the very same nature as yourself? Had they not similar inclinations to repress, similar passions to subdue, similar temptations to resist? Was not the world as alluring for them, pleasure as fascinating, self-gratification as sweet? Was not the observance of the Gospel maxims as difficult in former years as now, humiliation as painful, self-denial as trying? Is it to the heaven of the martyrs you aspire, or has another been created for souls less

generous, and hearts less resolute? Ah!" she exclaims, "with so great a crowd of witnesses over your head, lay aside every weight and sin which surrounds you, and run by patience to the fight proposed to you." (Heb. xii. 1.) And thus, by not merely confining her instructions to verbal lessons, but exhibiting practical illustrations of their efficacy, the Church, like a true mother, arouses our fortitude in the moment of discouragement, and animates us to exertion in the hour of nature's weakness.

Again, in all our troubles and trials, she provides us with ample sources of sweet consolation. She teaches us that when our souls are sorrowful and oppressed—fainting and falling under the weight of temptation; well nigh weary of the life-long contest against self; disheartened, dispirited, and apparently helpless, an all-sufficient though invisible resource lies quite within our reach. She whispers that a divine Physician, who came, not for the healthy, but for the infirm, is close at hand. She reminds us that the heart which for love of us was once sad even unto death, still beats just near our own; and she says: "O you of little faith! instead of sinking under the burden of the cross, go to Jesus, ever present on the altar; confide your griefs to Him; unite your tears to those which compassion for mortal miseries drew from His eyes, and

learn by experience that there is no sympathy like the sympathy of the Man of sorrows, no comfort like that which flows from the lips of the most loving, as "the most lovely among the sons of men."

She teaches us, that all-desolate and friendless as we may seem, we have a mother beyond the skies, who loves us with more than a mother's love, and holds in her rich right hand a balm for all our wounds and a remedy for all our wants.

She teaches us, that destined as we are to be one day the associates of the angels, the blessed intercourse is suffered to begin even here, where a spirit of light ever walks at our side by day, and bends over our couch by night; hovers near us in our hours of pain; speaks to us in our hours of solitude, and never diverts from us His loving eyes, whether beaming with heaven-born joy, when we steadily follow the ways of virtue, or heavy with the sadness which even an angel may feel, when we unhappily swerve from the path of duty.

She teaches us, that through the communion of saints we claim companionship also with "the spirits of the just made perfect" (Heb. xii. 23), who having "kept the faith, and finished their course" (2 Tim. iv. 7), have preceded us by a short time in the home to which our own steps are journeying; and by presenting to our view

the rewards lavished on those who, once our brethren on earth, will one day be our kindred in heaven, she stimulates us to a renewal of exertion, while for the farther encouragement of our weakness, she holds out the promise of their powerful and acceptable intercession on our behalf.

And when death lays its hand on one beloved, and deaf to our supplications, casts its icy arms fast round its prey, who comes to comfort us in our sorrow? Who wipes away the tear, and stills the heaving breast, and checks the groan of agony—perhaps despair—as it rises to the lips? Religion, again; our sweet religion, which says, that the lost are "not dead, but only sleeping" (St. Luke, viii. 52); and that lifeless as lies the form, and pulseless as is the heart, and pale the brow, and cold the once warmly throbbing bosom, our love can still reach the departed spirit; our prayers refresh it; our alms relieve it; our patient resignation assuage its anguish, and still its moanings. And not satisfied with having thus smoothened our path through life; alleviated our griefs, and brightened our joys—it is religion again which hangs over our death pillow, to chase away the appalling terrors of the grave; to support our fainting hearts by the vision of God's mercies; to revive our expiring eyes by the image of the crucified Redeemer; to

invoke the divine clemency in our behalf, and enlist in our favour the interest of all the angels and the prayers of all the saints. And when at her bidding, the Christian soul has fled from its earthly tabernacle, and gone to meet the bright army of martyrs, and the glorious phalanx of confessors, and the glittering choirs of radiant angels, and the dazzling band of white-robed virgins, she breathes over it the suppliant "Requiem," which none can hear without a prayer that the same sweet solemn strains may one day plead at heaven's gate for them; without a feeling that it is well to be of that Church whose heart is the heart of a mother, and whose very forms and external rites are, as already observed, so beautifully adapted to man's nature, that in a manner inexplicable by words, they touch on some sensitive spot hidden far down in his deep soul, and there awaken emotions which silently tell of heaven's sweetness, and raise the loving soul to heaven's God.

In life and death, in joy and sorrow, in sickness and health, our holy religion, the holy Catholic religion, is our light and our strength; our refuge and our home; our treasure and our comfort; for it is our God, or at least the medium of union with Him. Who then that calls herself a Catholic, will not glory in the title, and cling with hourly increasing love to that one,

pure, holy Church of which she is a child, however unworthy?—"the spotless bride" of Christ, unwrinkled by time, and untouched by decay; venerable for her years, yet vigorous in energy, fresh in heart, and comely in countenance as in the early days of blooming youth;—the Ark of Salvation, unscathed by the tempests of ages;—"the house of our holiness," where God himself ever dwells; the sanctuary "of our glory where our lovely things" are deposited, (Is. lxiv. 11,) and our precious things all stored;—the morning beam, to guide our steps through the perilous journey of life's weary day;—the evening star, to brighten its close with the haven-gilt light of humble hope; the glorious sun, to cheer us eternally by its ray, and to warm us in its splendours even when the material orbs above our heads are extinguished, and the mighty "heavens have departed as a book that is folded up." (Apoc. vi. 14.) Oh! "let us love" her "not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth;" (St. John, iii. 18,) and sing for ever with the Psalmist, "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord!" (Ps. lxxxiii. 2.)

CHAPTER III.

HUMILITY AND FORTITUDE, THE GUARDIANS OF FAITH.

An exhortation to attachment to your holy Faith may seem at best superfluous, now, when in the first fresh ardour of piety, and the blessed ignorance of inexperience, you deem *that* treasure safe beyond the reach of danger, and fancy that although it is right to be prepared for minor perils at your entrance into the world, an assault against your principles of belief is something quite too dreadful to be apprehended. But you should not forget that precisely in proportion to the value of the treasure, is the eagerness of man's spiritual enemy to rob him of it, wholly or in part. That merciless foe knows the priceless worth of the holy Faith at least as well as you do, and considers something gained if he succeed in weakening the influence of its principles on the conduct, even though he cannot entirely eradicate them from the heart. He has many and very potent allies to aid him in the unholy work—allies in the religious world, from the fanatical zealot to the calumnious tract writer; allies in the intellectual world, from the self-

styled rationalist to the specious sophist; allies in the literary world, from the scientific author to the music breathing poet, and the vendor of paltry romance; allies in general society, and in domestic privacy; allies in man's innate love of independence and aversion from restraint; allies in our natural desire of enjoyment, and repugnance to suffering; allies, in a word, countless, energetic, powerful, subtle, and intelligent. Considering how vast and how formidable is the host of Satan's agents, you cannot but perceive that the chances are fairly in favour of your encountering some one or more of them in your journey through life, and surely the alarming discovery must suggest the necessity of substituting holy fear and salutary self-diffidence for excessive confidence and security, as well as the prudence of anticipating, that so you may ward off, if possible, the approach of adversaries so numerous and insidious. It may, no doubt, be your privilege to pass through the world without meeting any of the external dangers which there menace Faith; but as in the event of your being much thrown into society of mixed religions, the contrary is equally likely, caution and foresight cannot but prove advantageous. It is, alas! too true, that many, not more frail than you, have encountered the peril unprepared and unarmed, only to perish in it.

Pride is, as you know, the great fountain whence originally flowed the troubled waters of heresy and infidelity; but so ancient is the date of that first destructive inundation, that it would seem as if the spring should ere now be exhausted—drained to the very last drop. Yet, not so. It appears, on the contrary, gifted with a magic power of perpetual self-reproduction—the rushing torrent it sends forth on the work of devastation, abundant and impetuous now as in the day when that work began. To intellectual pride, heresy and infidelity are still indebted, as of old, not merely for their existence, but also to a great extent for their growth and propagation, and thus it is that the process is carried on. Man, an insect of the clay, an atom of the air, a vapour of the morning; man, a dependent creature, indebted to his Almighty Creator for every spiritual faculty which distinguishes him from the senseless beast of the field—for the power to think, and to connect thought; for the capacity to comprehend, and analyze, and argue; man, whose splendid endowments are but lent, and whose glorious intelligence may in an instant find itself shrouded in darkness deeper than that of the miserable idiot who now perhaps excites more of his disgust than his compassion; man, so frail, so ignorant, so lowly, dares to measure his wisdom with God's wisdom—to scrutinise

mysteries which in this life are meant to be impervious—to subject the doctrines of Faith to the test of human criticism, and then, either in the uncompromising spirit of unmitigated infidelity, altogether to deny the existence of revelation, or in the modified unbelief of heresy, to sweep from his creed those articles which, because they do not meet his comprehension, or suit his practice, he thinks fit to stigmatize as inconsistent with the right of human reason to judge for itself. And this he terms philosophy! And this he deems a legitimate assertion of mental independence!

The unbelief thus born of pride has still to look for its dissemination to the concurrence of the originating principle, without which it could neither extend its sphere, nor consolidate its power. Were the doctrine of mental independence to appeal to none but humble hearts, it would make no proselytes, notwithstanding the versatility of its resources, and the plausibility of its arguments; but, addressed to self-sufficient spirits, inflated with their own imaginary intellectual superiority, it readily evokes from their pride a responsive echo, and rapidly gains disciples in their ranks. Blinded by self-conceit, these deluded beings cannot see the web of inconsistencies in which they involve themselves by asserting that the subjection of reason's powers

to the dominion of God, is an infringement on reason's rights, and so, enrolling themselves among the advocates of those rights, they fall unconsciously into a deep-laid snare of Satan.

If you should ever come in contact with these proud, but specious theorists, shrink with terror from their insinuating, and for that reason, peculiarly pernicious doctrines. Recur to God with ardour and earnestness proportioned to the imminence of the danger. Tremble, lest that fatal pride, which you inherit in common with the rest of Adam's children, should add its weight to the external influences already enlisted against you. Silence, boldly and at once, the first faint interior whisper that dares but breathe in opposition to the Church's lessons. Ask yourself whether it is inconsistent with reason to recognize in that exalted faculty the noblest gift of your Creator's hand; and whether, viewing it as such, the spontaneous impulse of mere gratitude should not prompt you to subject it absolutely to Him, who exacts from his creatures the homage of the understanding, no less than of the heart? Ask yourself whether it would not be simply rational to admit in the study of religion, as you are continually compelled to acknowledge in every other species of investigation, that there are certain immovable barriers beyond which our intellectual powers are not permitted to pass, and

then consider whether, consistently with the admission of this undeniable truth, reason itself should not concur with religion in suggesting reverential subjection to an ordinance we are powerless to resist? Ask yourself, again, whether the most enlightened mind can justly deem it dorogatory to its privileges to bow to the unintelligible mysteries of faith, while it daily assents, without hesitation, to the equally impenetrable mysteries of science? Whether it is inconsistent with reason humbly to confess our incapacity to penetrate abstruse religious truths, when hourly experience shows that we cannot understand the laws which regulate our own being, or point out the hidden springs which set the mind's wondrous machinery in motion, or account for the strange connection between thought and action, or explain the ceaseless alternations of our mysterious feelings? Whether it is irrational in us, whose sphere of information, and capabilities of judging are so limited, to believe what the highly gifted in mind, and richly abounding in stores of deepest learning, have believed without cavil or question for ages? And then, enquiring dispassionately what the upholders of reason's claims have done for either reason or religion, by their arrogant attempts to draw aside the veil, and send an unhallowed glance within the Holy of Holies, on which God has said no man shall dare to look,

you will find them to have produced a tissue of errors so gross, contradictions so palpable, arguments so untenable, and in many cases, extravagancies so absurd, that, were proof wanted of the weakness of minds, deluded by pride and blinded by passion, none more convincing need be sought than that furnished by those very persons who vaunted the powers of the human intellect, and undertook to maintain its authority in opposition to the authority of God. Fly from them on the wings of holy fear; beseech your heavenly father to "keep you as the apple of his eye from those that resist his right hand." (Ps. xvi. 8.) Take refuge in the impregnable fortress of humility, for there faith is safe, but there alone. Humility is self knowledge, and that once attained, you will feel no inclination for lofty flights to which you believe your strength inadequate. You will not only confess your incapacity to unravel the deep mysteries of religion, but recoil in alarm from the presumption which could suggest even a wish to do so. You will study your holy religion and investigate the grounds of your belief, not in the captious spirit of criticism, nor in the impious spirit of infidelity, but with an humble sense of your incapability to comprehend, unless help be given from above, through the teaching of your appointed guides. You will read not to become learned but to become

holy; you will examine, not to raise questions or start objections, but to bring understanding and will more and more perfectly under the captivity of faith; and while rejoicing at each new light which God vouchsafes you through your teachers, you will be equally satisfied to acquiesce blindly in such truths as are not destined to be comprehended yet, waiting patiently for a clearer manifestation, until the eternal sun arise, and the bright dawn of unclouded vision chase away the shadows of faith. Pray unceasingly for humility, the shield of faith; strive for it with earnestness proportioned to its importance and the difficulty of its attainment, and when you have put on its strong armour you will become invulnerable against the assaults of "the wicked one, whose fiery darts," instead of injuring you, will only recoil against himself. (Ephes. vi. 11, 16.)

In your intercourse with Protestants your faith may be exposed to a trial of another description, and one which has sometimes been found to tell with fatal effect on minds destitute at once of moral courage and Christian fortitude—the trial of ridicule. The usages of society are, to a certain extent, a safeguard against an overt manifestation of contempt for any particular class of religious opinions; yet

it is certain that bigotry and intolerance have been found to preponderate over good manners, and break the barrier of conventional restraints.

The mantle of affected politeness sometimes but ill conceals the half suppressed smile or gesture of mock pity for the superstition of narrow minded papists. Distant echoes may now and then reach you of the oft repeated, though equally often refuted charge of the idolatry of benighted Catholic image-worshippers; and it will, perhaps, fall to your lot to hear the holy and venerable faith of ages stigmatised as plebeian and unrefined, its adversaries meanwhile claiming for themselves superiority, both intellectual and social, as members of a newer church and followers of a more fashionable creed. Alas! alas! shall the child of the holy church envy their superiority, and not rather rejoice to be of the religion of the poor, whom Jesus loves; the religion of apostles, and confessors, and martyrs; the religion which her Redeemer taught and founded, which he sorrowed and toiled, and bled and died for? Shall the child of a mother so pure, so saintly, look on her sweet face with less of reverential love, because impiety has called her superstitious, and incredulity has declared her idolatrous? Shall she waver in her belief because the lip of ignorance has curled disdain-

fully, or blush at her privileges because the brow of fanaticism has worn a frown? Oh no! The true child will love her parent the more dearly, the more that parent is despised; she will cling to her the more tenderly when all the world beside abandon her. Fly trembling to her arms and hide your head in her bosom when scepticism mocks at her practices, and impiety tries to falsify her oracles; when infidelity rejects her existence, and the pen of calumny circulates spurious versions of her doctrines. Let no dread of scorn or sneer weaken the tie that binds you to her; no false shame induce you to disown her by even a gesture or a look; no force of ridicule tempt you to deny your veneration for even the least of her ceremonies, or to neglect in practice the slightest of her ordinances. Trample generously on human respect, opposing to it the noble courage which apprehends nothing but the risk of offending God. Rise superior to the opinions of men, which have in truth as little weight as the light column of smoke that floats for a moment on the air, then mingles with it, and vanishes. Always remember that those opinions can in no wise affect your intrinsic merits or demerits, for, that which you are before God, that alone you really are Keep ever in mind the declaration of Christ, "He that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my

Father who is in heaven, (St. Matt. x. 33), and feel that it were indeed better and happier to incur the contempt of all creatures, than to run the hazard of standing one day, terror-stricken and confounded, among the wretched group whom Christ will disown in presence of his angels, because they had not the fortitude to confess him before poor creatures of clay like themselves.

You need not be told that patient silence is the most dignified, as well as the most Christian, course you can adopt under trials such as those now under consideration. "In your patience you shall possess your soul," and not alone gain much merit in the sight of God, but farther make a favourable impression of the religion which inculcates and enforces even the heroism of the Gospel virtues. These trials would not have seemed much to the noble martyrs, and neither should they to you, whose glory and happiness it is to be the descendant of the martyrs.

When religion forms the subject of discussion between persons of varying persuasions, it is again obviously your safest and most suitable plan to abstain from any part in the conversation, unless actually called on for a defence or an explanation of your religious principles. The character of controversialist, generally speaking, ill becomes the female, whose very instinct should be her

prompter to reserve; and most especially is it inappropriate in the young and inexperienced, who should naturally shrink from putting themselves needlessly forward in debate or otherwise. As a rule, you may take it for granted, that the object of those who seek to draw you publicly into controversial discussions is, either to undermine your faith, or ridicule what they deem your over-credulity. Sincere inquirers will be more likely to address themselves to guides of maturer age and wider experience; or, should they be tempted to propose a doubt to you, will assuredly select some fitter opportunity than that afforded by a social meeting or a morning visit. Let your life be not only irreproachable, but exemplary, and this will be the most eloquent defence of your faith, as well as the most conclusive reply to all the arguments of its adversaries; while, if your conduct be at variance with your belief, although you should speak with the tongues of men and angels, you will make no impression on your hearers, and will advance the cause of religion in nothing. Silence may, no doubt, sometimes be distorted into an admission of the charges of infidelity, and consequently an occasional necessity may arise for breaking it. It may happen, too, that a word of explanation will weaken or remove a prejudice, and a correct statement overturn a false one. A direct and

sincere appeal for information should always elicit it, and thence arises the obligation of a thorough comprehension of the grounds of your faith, and of a perfect acquaintance with all its doctrines, those especially which form the ordinary subject of controversy between us and persons of different religious persuasions. Ignorance in these matters would be grievously reprehensible, first, because entailing a risk that the plausible, and to you unanswerable, arguments of Protestants or infidels might, because apparently unanswerable, create in your own heart any lurking doubt on the point in debate, and, secondly, because your incapacity to render an account of the hope that is in you (1 St. Pet. iii. 15), might deter earnest-minded inquirers from pursuing a topic which gave promise of so little satisfaction. As the memory is apt to lose more or less of its acuteness, unless it be kept in exercise, you should be careful to refresh yours from time to time on the important subject of the Church's doctrines, not confining yourself wholly to works of practical instruction on your personal duties, but extending your research, with cautious steps and an humble spirit, into the fields of controversy, there to glean information for the help of others, should they ask it of you, and to seek for yourself an increase, less of knowledge, than of faith, and hope, and love.

You must never, however, forget, that if faith is indispensably necessary to salvation, so also is charity, whose sweet spirit should be the animating principle of all your communications with those opposed to, as well as those united with you in belief. You know that "he who believes not shall be condemned" (St. Mark, xvi. 16); for that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi. 6); yet while thanking the Almighty for that first and best of gifts, and praying that all men may one day participate in the blessing, you are not to look on any one as personally excluded from the pale of salvation, or to presume to decide on the spiritual condition of any particular individual. "Only the Searcher of hearts," observes Dr. Milner, "can know who, and in what numbers are the individuals, exteriorly of other communions, but by the sincerity of their dispositions, belonging to the Catholic Church; therefore, while bound in charity to assert that nothing short of this sincere disposition, and the actual use of the means afforded by providence for discovering the true Church, to those out of it, can secure their salvation" (*End of Controversy*), you must hope that such is, perhaps, the disposition of those you encounter, and pray that if it be not now, at least it may yet be.

Of one thing you are sure—that whatever be the irresponsibility of others on the score of ignor-

ance, you never can claim a share in it, and whatever the allowances for those less favoured, there can be none for you, on whom heavenly light has been so profusely lavished. "Neglect not then the grace" of faith "that is in you" (1 Tim. iv. 4); but cherish it ardently, and cultivate it assiduously. Humility will be its protection against the attacks of proud philosophy; and Christian fortitude its defence against the assaults of human respect. Pray to the Giver of all good gifts to grant you these strong arms in the day of combat, and beseech Him to fill your heart with an ardent love of your holy religion, that you may prefer the loss of all things here below, to the misfortune of forfeiting that pure, precious, and glorious Faith which binds you to God through His holy Church.

As a counterpoise to the dangerous maxims which it may fall to your lot to hear in your intercourse with society of mixed religions, certain fundamental principles should be established in your mind and heart, so firmly, so immoveably, as to become in a manner a constituent portion of both, extending their influence to the whole tenor of your existence; lending their colouring to the entire body of your actions, and giving a bias to your every thought and opinion.

The first of these vital principles—the foundation on which the structure of religion rests,

the pivot on which the fabric turns, is faith in the existence of God; not mere acquiescence in the abstract truth—though even this some are found daring and senseless enough to deny—but firm belief, first, in the great truth itself, and then, as a consequence, in the results which flow from it. There is a God—a self-existing Being, from whom all existence proceeds as from its fountain. The united accents of many-voiced creation proclaim the fact. "The heavens show forth the glory of their Maker, and the firmament declareth itself the work of His hands" (Ps. xviii. 1). "The light, when He calleth, obeyeth with trembling, and the stars shine forth with cheerfulness to Him that made them" (Baruch, iii. 33, 35). "Ask the beasts and they shall teach thee, and the birds of the air, and they shall tell thee. Speak to the earth, and it shall answer thee: and the fishes of the sea shall tell. Who is ignorant that the hand of the Lord made all these things?" (Job, xii. 7, 8, 9). It needs not much argument to establish the point; a moment's reflection will convince any but the deliberately self-deluded, that "the Lord who made us is our God" (Ps. xcix. 3); and, admitting His existence, we shall quickly pass on to the next fundamental principle of our faith—belief in His absolute dominion over the creatures of His hands, and consequently in the unlimited sub-

jection of those dependent creatures to His superintending providence. It is not unusual with the infidel in theory, and the irreligious in practice, to take shelter under the argument that God is too great and exalted to concern His mighty Majesty about the petty affairs of mortals, and that therefore it matters nothing what may be the extent of our creed, provided only it embrace faith in the Divine existence; or what the form of our worship, provided we worship at all. Yet, His own infallible Word assures us, that insignificant as we are, and nothing worth, His providence over His creatures embraces details so minute, that a hair cannot fall from our heads without His knowledge (St. Mat. x. 30), nor a bird alight to the ground without His notice (ibid. 29), nor a raven cry to Him for food unheeded (Job, xxxviii. 41).

And after this, shall we venture to assert that that all-embracing Providence excludes from its observation and its rule, only the precious interests of our immortal souls? that the wisdom which governs the material creation, even to its least subdivision, has overlooked, as secondary, the claims of the spiritual world? revealed no religion to fix the method of our worship? taught no law to regulate our lives? lighted no lamp to guide our steps? This would be to impute inconsistency to eternal Wisdom, and short-

sightedness to Omniscience — a blasphemous thought from which the Christian heart recoils with horror. Rejecting this idea on the ground merely of its evident absurdity, we must admit as a necessary consequence of our belief in the existence of God, and in the wondrous workings of His wise and loving Providence, another fundamental principle of faith—the revelation of a religion, and the establishment of a church. Under one denomination or another, from the beginning of time, religion held dominion on earth; religion, not arbitrary, but fixed, both in principle and practice; religion, at first silently impressed on the heart by the hand of God, under the law of nature; then more distinctly promulgated in its details by His own Almighty voice under the written law, and finally brought to its full perfection by Christ Himself, under the new law, or law of grace, of which the old law was but a dim shadow and imperfect type. That now, as ever, there is a true Church, we know—that there can be *but* one we are also aware, for truth must necessarily be undivided; and that our own holy Church is that one, we believe, because it alone possesses the four characteristic marks which none but the true Church can justly claim. Admitting the truth, the infallibility and indefectibility of the holy Roman Catholic Church, we not only at once recognize

her authority to direct us in matters of faith, but farther, value as one of our highest privileges, the right to appeal to her unerring tribunal for guidance in all our uncertainties, and direction in all our practical difficulties; and we feel that the grace conferred on us on the day which received us into communion with her, is one for which we can never sufficiently thank our Almighty Benefactor. If deeply impressed with your happiness in having been admitted through God's mercy into the one and only fold, out of which there is no salvation, and if thoroughly convinced that this privilege is incomparably greater than any the world can bestow, and therefore worth maintaining at the expense of any sacrifice, you will find in this strong conviction an effectual antidote against the poison of infidelity, and a powerful counterpoise to all the temptations which may assail your religious principles in your passage through this region of probation.

A third fundamental principle to be engraven on your heart and intertwined with its very fibres, is, belief in the immortality of the soul—not a mere theoretical, speculative belief, but such as brings in its train an ever-present consciousness of accountability for every thought, word, action, and omission of each passing hour—a sense of responsibility which extends its influence over

every feeling, and regulates every desire—which never wearies of its duties or slumbers at its post —which never declines in its vigilance, or relaxes its control. Thrice happy they whose faith in the immortality of the soul leads to practical results like these! Impressed, imbued, penetrated with this all-important truth, they will be in little danger of risking the interests of that undying spirit for the attainment of any temporary advantage, or the avoidance of any transitory suffering. In heaven they know that joys await the good, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind of man imagined; in hell, tortures equally beyond the reach of mortal sense to realize, or mortal intellect to grasp, and little do they dream of imperilling the one, or hazarding the other, for the sake of anything here below. According to the counsel of the Imitation, their left eye is for earthly things, the right for the things of heaven. Time, with its cares and solicitudes, its pursuits and enjoyments, engages their moderate attention, but eternity engrosses their hearts. They would not displease God to secure the approval of the universe. They are not ashamed to be classed among the disciples of Christ. They do not blush at their connection with his holy Church, or hesitate to avow it openly to the world, even when human respect might suggest to the pusillanimous Chris-

tian a compromise of principle. They are not carried away by the specious arguments of free-thinkers, nor led astray by the false light of their own reason. "There is a God; to Him I am accountable; in His hands are eternal rewards and eternal punishments, one of which must fall to my lot, according to my deserts. I am the child of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those who never change their faith from Him."—(Tobias, ii. 18.) Oh! what a shield against the world's temptations! what a defence against the native corruption of the heart! what a support against the infirmity of nature! Who that lived on this thought would ever risk her salvation? And why do we not all live on it? Of what use is the teaching of Faith, if its lessons are suffered to lie dormant in our hearts? "As the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without good works is dead" (St. James, ii. 26); nay, worse than dead, since it will serve to our more severe condemnation in the terrible day of final retribution. "Hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. iii. 9), so that "when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be made wonderful in all them who have believed" (2 Thes. i. 10), you may be found rich in that faith, which having wrought by charity (Gal. v. 6), has merited the crown of everlasting life.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST MEANS OF MAINTAINING THE SPIRIT OF FAITH—FIDELITY TO THE DUTY OF PRAYER.

THE precious virtue of Faith was granted us through God's great mercy, at a time when we were unable either to appreciate the favour, or to thank our Benefactor for it; but although for its original donation we are indebted solely to His pure and most unmerited bounty, nevertheless, for its preservation and increase, we must employ our own personal exertions, always, of course, subordinate to, and aided by divine grace. Almighty God has prepared the soil, but we must cultivate it, else its fertilizing properties will soon be dissipated. He has planted the seed; but we must watch and tend it, or it will never spring to maturity. He has enkindled the heavenly fire; but we must supply fuel, or it will smoulder and die. He created us without our aid, and regenerated us without our knowledge; but He will not save us without our co-operation. While our mental faculties lay undeveloped in the years of infancy and early childhood, He took care of the treasure which we were ourselves unable to protect; but now in our

maturer age, He has confided it to our own guardianship, and appointed us stewards over the precious possession—but stewards only. We cannot suffer it to remain useless; neither can we squander and dissipate, and cast it away. The day approaches when He will enter into a minute inquiry concerning the use made of it; and in that awful day, He will be satisfied with nothing less than ample profit on the original deposit.

You have already reviewed the dangers which may possibly menace that invaluable treasure of faith in your future intercourse with society; you have considered the consequent necessity of adopting precautionary measures against them; and have also seen the nature of those precautionary measures. But that you may indeed prove a faithful steward of your heavenly Father, and safely "keep the good thing committed to your trust by the Holy Ghost" (2 Tim. i. 14), you have to extend your views still farther; and to guard not only against the external influences opposed to the open profession of your faith, but likewise against another peril of no less magnitude—the gradual decline of its interior spirit, which in general thrives but ill in the world's ungenial atmosphere. As it is your holy purpose to employ the arms recommended to you for the defeat of the visible enemies of your

faith, so should it equally enter into your good resolutions at this critical epoch, to omit none of the means suggested for sustaining and strengthening its life giving spirit.

You already know that the first and most efficacious of those means is, fervent attachment to, and inviolable fidelity in the discharge of the great duty of prayer. The necessity of prayer is obvious. It is to the Christian what the beacon is to the mariner—his security; what the polar star is to the wanderer in the wilderness—his guide; what food is to the wasted victim of famine—his life; what the whisper of hope is to the despairing—his salvation; what the gentle voice of sympathy is to the mourner—his solace; what gold is to the miser—his treasure; what sunshine is to the bird—its joy; what the bright smile of childhood is to the withered heart of age—its gladness; what the rudder is to the ship—its propelling principle. In temptation and in sin; in doubt and in difficulty; in all the vicissitudes and casualties of life; in all the trials and struggles attendant on the spiritual warfare, prayer is the one great refuge, the one unfailing resource of the soul; what then must the soul be without it? Alas! "a reed shaken by the wind." (St. Luke, vii. 24); a dismasted vessel drifting helplessly among rocks and quicksands; a sapless tree, that bears no blossom and grows no fruit; a drooping

flower, that boasts no beauty and diffuses no fragrance. There is no elasticity in that soul; no vigour, no youth, no freshness. It cannot run in the way of holiness, or bound forward in the paths of virtue; it can at best but creep along, with slow, faltering, irresolute steps. It is left to itself, and therefore it is weak. It has discarded the prop on which it might have leant so securely, and therefore it totters. It has rejected the light, and therefore it gropes in obscurity and consequent danger. "All who go far from thee, O Lord, shall perish" (Ps. lxxii. 27); and this they do who, neglecting to pray, close up the only avenue which leads to thee!

If a very little reflection suffices to manifest the necessity of prayer, a very little experience will likewise prove its efficacy. Who that has partially or wholly neglected it for a day, or a week, or a month, has not felt her heart grow colder, and her spirit heavier with each new omission; and when at last the habit of neglect was formed, so that the pious practices of earlier years came to be numbered among things forgotten, how much deeper grew the darkness of the understanding; how much stronger the dominion of passion; how much more intense the love of the world, with its transitory goods, its fading glories, and its hollow joys!

The vast difference in the spiritual condition

of those who neglect, and those who pursue the exercise of prayer, is in itself sufficient to prove the wondrous power of that great remedy of human evils, and refuge of human wants. The soul attached to prayer derives support from an invisible source—she has food to eat, of which men know not. Prayer is to her what corporal nourishment is to the body; each time she partakes of the heavenly banquet she renews her vigour, and as she constantly returns to the supernatural feast, so does she constantly acquire an increase of strength. Her steps never falter; her hope never sinks; her heart never faints; her ardour never cools. She knows that whatever be her difficulties and her frailty, she can always pray, and that prayer is omnipotent; therefore, she never permits the consideration of her weakness to depress her courage, or suffers the intervention of obstacles to oppose her progress, but triumphs over the one, and tramples on the other, by a speedy recourse to the ever present, and never failing remedy.

The habit of prayer creates the habit of virtue; the soul that prays frequently is always recollected, consequently on her guard against temptation from without, and on the watch against surprises from within. She cannot spend much time with God, without experiencing the calming influence of His sweet presence. It allays her

irritation; dispels her disquietude; checks her impetuosity; softens the asperity of her feelings; and silences the suggestions of evil. She comes to the feet of her heavenly Physician restless, anxious, doubting, fearing; alarmed at her own impotence, and terrified at the power and malignity of her spiritual foes. Like a trembling dove she flies to his bosom, and in a moment she is secure, as in an impregnable fortress; for when God arises his enemies are put to flight, and they that hate Him vanish from before his face.—(Ps. lxvii. 2.) Oh! who that has tried, has not experienced it? Who that has turned a sorrowing heart to God, has not felt sweet drops of healing balm distilled into it from above? Who that has sought in Him the comfort which creatures were powerless to give, has not exclaimed from her deep soul, as the refreshing breeze of divine consolation sighed softly over it, "Who, oh! who is like unto God!" Who that has fled to his paternal arms, has not owned, as they gently folded round her, that it was good to be there; sweet to be encircled by that protecting love? Who that has looked up into His face when clouds were dark, and winds were wailing, has not felt the sunshine of its smile reflected on her heart, making the barren spots verdant, and the waste spots fertile, and "the wilderness to flourish like the lily" (Is. xxxv. 1)?

Who that has gone to Him labouring and heavily laden has not realized in herself the truth of His own promise, and found refreshment, and tasted peace and contentment? Thus it happens that the miserable feelings of our fallen nature, which often cause us so much suffering, and in their indulgence so much sin, lose power to harm us or others in the purifying influence of God's own presence. We, who, without the aid of prayer, should be the slave of a host of petty domestic tyrants, find them laid prostrate by its help, and come from it strengthened to trample on them bravely, and introduce into their vacated places the virtues opposed to them. And thus it is, that by its own efficacy, and almost unconsciously to ourselves, the habit of prayer leads to the habit of virtue.

The consoling influences of prayer are not always, it is true, thus sensibly felt, nor its omnipotent efficacy thus vividly apparent. There are many good and gracious reasons why our sovereign Lord and most loving Father sometimes sees fit to impart His gifts in so disguised a form, that human senses cannot discern them, and scarcely can even the eye of the heart discover them, although its keenest powers be put forth in the effort. Nevertheless, we know by faith that before His ascension into heaven, Jesus promised He would grant all we should ask of Him

in His own sweet name, and leaning on that promise as on a rock that cannot be shaken, we firmly believe that prayer, accompanied with suitable dispositions, will never be rejected, although sensible evidences of its acceptance may be withheld. We know, for we feel, that though prayer may impart no visible light, it communicates invisible support. It may leave us, as it found us, very desolate and lonely; still its silent work has been accomplished, in the infusion of strength to watch resignedly, though perhaps sorrowfully, by the side of Him who tasted a deeper desolation, and drained the cup of more utter loneliness. It may not have removed the harassing temptations against which we have implored its aid; but besides bearing us safely through the danger, it has sent us away richer than we came, in the peerless, priceless treasure of increased self-knowledge and consequent humility. We must not, then, be discouraged when prayer feels very difficult; when its exercise seems but a new trial added to those from which we had fondly hoped for deliverance through its means. Then especially is the time to persevere in prayer, like Jesus in His agony, and to us, as to Him, will be given strength to suffer submissively, which we know is a greater grace, and a higher favour, than to be altogether freed from suffering.

If the difficulty you may sometimes find in

prayer will never justify your neglecting it, still less assuredly can such neglect be excused on any of the various frivolous pretexts so often alleged in extenuation of the omission. The obligation is imperative; the precept unconditional; the rule general. "We must pray always, and never faint" (St. Luke, xviii. 1); never relax; never desist. You cannot imbue your mind too deeply with this important maxim, nor can you surround yourself with too many safeguards against a failure in this most essential duty. For this end two precautions are especially necessary: First, you must not leave to the impulse or caprice of the moment, the selection of your spiritual exercises—overcrowding one day with prayers, and perhaps omitting all, or nearly all, the next. Your devotions for each day should be fixed, or rather, as they no doubt have been fixed in your retreat preparatory to leaving school, your care should be to adhere most punctually to the rule then laid down under the guidance of your spiritual advisers, neither increasing nor diminishing the number of your stated prayers; never encumbering yourself with a multiplicity of practices, which would only overstrain and fatigue your mind; limiting yourself to as many as you can accomplish well, and never giving up through whim or sloth any of the few you have undertaken.

Secondly—If you mean to persevere long in

the faithful observance of this first recommendation, you must not leave it to chance to supply you with time and opportunity for the discharge of your spiritual duties. If you do, you will omit, quite as often as you fulfil them. As your prayers for each day should be fixed by rule, so likewise should be the hour for saying them; and as the early part of the day is that most free from interruption, it will be well to avail of its quiet leisure for the due discharge of the most important obligation which the day can bring; not that it is advisable to compress all the prayers of the day into any one given portion of it, for as our days should be wholly sanctified, the vivifying influence of prayer should extend to each part of them; but for the important duties of meditation and pious reading at least, the morning is for many reasons the most suitable time.

Among the pious practices to which you have been habituated, during the late years of school training, that of daily meditation is among the most essential, and in proportion to its great utility, should be the inflexibility of your resolution to adhere to it faithfully and undeviatingly. Short lived, indeed, will be your holy resolutions, and evanescent the fruit of the instructions you have received, if you renounce the practice of meditation. St. Teresa said she would answer

for the salvation of any one who should daily make one quarter of an hour's meditation; does not the converse of the assertion hold equally good? The world cannot pause to think, and, therefore, with "desolation is it made desolate." (Jer. xii. 11.) It is so busy, so bustling, so intent on its own peculiar interests, that it has not time to cast one passing glance on the everlasting world to come; but lo! quite suddenly, just when it dreams the least of it, the gates of eternity cast their shadow over it, and then—oh! then—it finds time to think, but time too to regret, with eternal tears, that its reflections came too late.

You are just stepping forth into that busy world, and about to become an actor in the stirring scene. Beware, lest after a while you too should learn to deem its concerns of superior importance to the interests of your soul, and carried along by the heedless crowd, awaken to the terrible future, only when its long forgotten horrors have become a dread reality. If you give up meditation, you may consider the first step very surely taken in the downward course from grace to sin. The inclosure once broken, the treasure within becomes the ready prey of the spoiler. The joys of heaven will seem less and less bright, and the torments of hell less and less appalling, when you have for some time dis-

continued to remember their existence. Sin's hideous malice and God's terrible justice will lose somewhat of their deep colouring, when, from ceasing to reflect on these momentous truths, you have suffered the false maxims of the world, and the evil suggestions of Satan, to supplant the principles of faith, and eradicate the impressions of piety. The first step in the descent once taken, each that follows will but serve to accelerate the downward progress. The great fundamental truths of faith once buried in oblivion, the edifice will soon totter and fall, for it has lost its main pillar, its strongest prop. Meditation being renounced, vocal prayer will quickly succeed; so will spiritual reading; so will daily Mass; so will the sacraments. The soul has lost its tone; its energy is gone; its tastes are vitiated; therefore the practices which once were its life and its joy, have become simply a burden, to be dragged on wearily for a little way, and then flung aside altogether as too weighty and fatiguing.

These are sad, sober truths, although to you they may, just now, sound like fiction, as they do to all who have not yet learned them by personal experience, or by observation on the personal experience of others. You are happy in being permitted to reap the fruit of that experience, without incurring its penalties.

Profit then of the privilege, and resolve, with a resolution which nothing shall shake or weaken, that every morning, before the duties of the day have claimed your leisure, or its amusements or cares divided your attention, you will devote at least a quarter of an hour to the great duty of meditation, preceded by the appropriate acts, accompanied with the requisite dispositions, and concluded by the customary prayer, and a practical resolution on the correction of some definite fault, or the practice of some definite virtue, in the manner you have been taught; following up this holy exercise, if possible, by the spiritual lecture, to which you have also been in the habit of daily devoting a quarter of an hour. If you do so, your days will be full, for the blessing invoked at early dawn will rest on them through every moment of their progress. You will be prepared, through God's mercy, for the sudden assaults of the Evil One, and when his voice clamours most loudly, the pleadings of another voice will drown its accents; a sweet soft voice, the echo of some encouraging reflection, some good resolution, some heavenly impression produced by your morning meditation, and thus the very memory of that meditation, falling on the heart as refreshing water on fevered lips, will allay the heat of temptation's fiery furnace, and open for you a safe egress from amidst its flames.

The holy thoughts, gathered like the manna of heaven in the quiet morning hour, will ascend in fervent aspirations to God many a time in the day, keeping the eyes of the soul ever open to his presence; and even when the sun has run its course, the treasury will be found not only unexhausted, but still more richly replenished than at first. The same holy thoughts will arise again, as the evening's devotions come round, and under their shadow the day's final acts will be worthy of the first. The heart will pour out its gratitude for the many graces granted in the hours which have elapsed since the morning oblation; its sorrow for the faults which, on a careful examination of its recesses, it may feel accountable for; and its supplication for protection during the unseen, and, therefore, unfeared dangers of the night; and its latest memory, like its earliest, will be of Him who is "the beginning and the end;" (Apoc. xxi. 6.) "the immortal King of Ages, the only God, to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever." (1 Tim. i. 17.)

CHAPTER V.

SECOND MEANS OF MAINTAINING THE SPIRIT OF FAITH — FREQUENT CONFESSION AND COMMUNION.

PRAYER, in general, is an efficacious means of grace, and, therefore, an indispensable condition for persevering in virtue. It may, in one sense, be called the most indispensable of all other conditions; for though the sacraments are the immediate channels of grace, and the Holy Eucharist, in particular, grace itself, yet it is certain, that if neglect of prayer once become habitual, the use of sacraments will, as an inevitable consequence, be relinquished, and the fountain springs of grace become to us as fountains sealed up.

You have already seen the value of that precious gift of Faith, which is your privilege and your blessing; and you have likewise seen the imperative necessity of most cautiously guarding against the extinction of its spirit in your heart. You have, moreover, determined to avert so dire a misfortune by the adoption of all the requisite means, and viewing the great duty of prayer as the first of those means, you have determined on discharging it with punctual

fidelity. Your next resolution will be, as a sequel to the first, to approach, at regular stated times, the holy sacraments of confession and communion. This you will need no exhortation to do, if you understand the advantages which accrue from a frequent and worthy reception of both.

The tribunal of penance is, in a peculiar manner, the tribunal of God's mercy, which, above all His works, as His own word declares it, may be said to surpass itself in this its own seat by excellence—its very throne, and most especial theatre. There a full, free, and generous pardon at all times awaits the contrite and humble sinner, on terms most easy compared with the penalties his iniquities deserve. There the very last and worst of criminals may, in a moment, exchange the deeply dyed garb of crime for a robe pure as that first imparted by baptism's regenerating waters. There, "sins deep as scarlet are made white as snow;" and those red as crimson are made white as wool (Is. i. 18). There the loving Father clasps the ungrateful prodigal to his bosom, and the tender Shepherd receives the long wandering sheep to his arms; there angels hover round, ready to bear to their own bright heaven the tidings that "justice and peace have kissed" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11), and all-powerful grace triumphed over sin and Satan—glad tidings that will impart new

joy to the beatified spirits above, and evoke new canticles of praise from their harmonious choirs.

God's liberality in the holy tribunal is not restricted merely to the pardon of mortal sin, but holds many rich blessings in reserve for those also who approach it sullied only with the blemish of venial faults, and, therefore, still possessed of their heavenly Father's grace and friendship. Venial sin, although a slight evil as compared with mortal, is not in itself a slight, but, on the contrary, a very grievous evil—an evil to be detested with a vehemence, and shunned with an earnestness, secondary only to those which mortal sin demands. Venial sins, if committed deliberately and suffered to accumulate, lead to most fearful consequences; but the all-loving Redeemer, who knows the clay of which He formed us, has provided a preventive to their accumulation in the sacrament of penance, which remits not only mortal, but also venial sin, confessed in the spirit of humility and sorrow. Again, beside cancelling venial sin, the miraculous virtue of absolution communicates to the soul which receives it in the state of grace, an augmentation of strength to avoid future venial transgressions, an increase of charity and all supernatural virtues, renewed facility for leading a pure and saintly life, and greater fortitude in overcoming all obstacles to the pursuit of holiness. It is, more-

over, the best preparation for receiving the all-holy God in the sacrament of His love.

Happy they who, from the high motive of becoming more and more pleasing to Jesus Christ, frequently approach the marvellous sacrament whence proceed so many graces, and who take care to secure an ample participation in those graces, by presenting themselves in the spirit of faith and confidence, humility and compunction, grateful love and sincere determination to improve in solid virtue!

In preparing for confession, two extremes should be cautiously avoided; that of carelessness on the one hand, and scrupulous anxiety on the other. Impressed, as you should always be, with the insufficiency of your own efforts for the accomplishment of any supernatural work, acknowledge it most especially in this, convinced that unless the light of God dispel the illusions of self-love, your chance of seeing yourself as you really are is small indeed. Placing your chief dependence on prayer, implore God's aid with an earnestness proportioned to your necessity for it. Make your examination of conscience *carefully*, as your catechism prescribes, but calmly and tranquilly, without agitation, anxiety, or eagerness, relying far more on the light of God than on your own; and do not prolong it unreasonably, for this serves only to weary and bewilder the

mind, to exhaust devotion, and to encroach on the time which ought to be more profitably employed in the disposing the heart and will for absolution. St. Francis of Sales says that a quarter of an hour's examination of conscience is sufficient for those who go once a week to confession; you surely cannot err in following the opinion of so great a light of the church.

To obtain contrition, beg it of God through the sorrow of the breaking Heart of Jesus in the Garden; and while endeavouring to excite it in your soul by the attentive consideration of the ordinary motives suggested for that end, feel that it is God alone who can give it. Never be alarmed or disquieted at the absence of *sensible* contrition. St. Francis of Sales says again, that the sincere desire of contrition fully implies its existence; and another holy and enlightened author tells us that contrition consists essentially in an upright act of the will which detests sin and firmly resolves never again to commit it. These are dispositions, always through God's grace, within your reach, although feeling may not be under your control.

While receiving absolution, instead of occupying your mind with a distracting examination of the imperfections of your late confession, imagine that you actually behold the scene which is indeed most really being enacted, although invi-

sible to you. Draw near to the cross of Jesus, near enough to note each movement of the agonizing Victim. Raise your eyes to His, and you will see a gentle, pleading, tearful glance turned on you; not a reproachful glance, but a look of love like that which rested on St. Peter, and pierced his heart with inexhaustible compunction. Look at the livid lips of the Divine Sufferer, and you will see that trembling sounds issue from them; very low, yet clearly audible to the ear of faith, the holy words of absolution, which his minister and representative but echoes in your corporal hearing. Contemplate each one of His mangled wounds, and feel that you can almost *see*—so certain is the fact—the blood trickling from them to your soul, and as it falls, purifying, cleansing, strengthening, fertilizing, beautifying all before it. With this view in prospect, you will need no reminder to renew, with all the love and sorrow and fervour of your soul, the act of contrition, and firm resolution of henceforth devoting your undivided heart to God, which should have been made before entering the confessional, nor will you require any other stimulus than the gratitude of your own heart, to the discharge of the great duty of thanksgiving. A holy author advises that after confession you spend some time in recollection at the feet of Jesus Christ, looking on yourself as a person freed from a heavy burden,

and enjoying in God's presence the happiness of emancipation; thanking your most merciful Benefactor for providing so efficacious a remedy for your infirmities; beseeching Him to preserve you from abusing of the facility with which He deigns to receive you every time you return to Him sincerely; animating yourself to fidelity in the observance of your good resolutions; invoking the aid of the Blessed Virgin and all the Saints, and concluding your devotions by saying your penance.

It must not be forgotten, that confession, although in itself an effectual remedy for the soul's maladies and infirmities, may, like all things else, even the holiest and best, be abused and perverted. Of this misfortune, there will however, be no danger for you, if you always approach it in the sincere and upright dispositions now recommended—if you adopt the safe rule suggested by pious writers, to make each confession as if you knew beyond a doubt it would be your last; and finally, if you keep steadily in view that vivifying principle of faith which should be the spirit and life of every act of the Christian, and of none more than that which now engages our attention. The light of faith revealing to you Jesus Christ Himself in His representative, with what respect will you not see the person, and hear the voice of God in those of his minister! With what self-abase-

ment and generous renunciation of human feeling, will you not prostrate yourself at the feet of Him, who, now your Redeemer, will one day be your judge! Tremblingly alive to the dread account to be hereafter demanded of all His graces, and very particularly of this, how carefully will you guard against the danger of frequenting confession as a mere matter of routine, which is to exercise no practical influence on your conduct, and produce no solid fruits of self-reformation! Feeling every time you approach as if that dread account were then and there about to be required, how strongly will each confession confirm your determination to profit of those powerful graces—thus tending, according to the designs of God, to the correction of your defects, and the progress of your soul in perfection!

Never speak of confession or confessors—subjects which religion, honour, and prudence equally concur in interdicting as ordinary topics of conversation. Religion tells you, that like all other holy things, confession should be spoken of only on suitable occasions and with becoming reverence, consequently, that it cannot, under any circumstances, be made the subject of light, frivolous discussion. Honour adds, that as your confessor could not, for any possible consideration, betray the confidence you repose in him, it is ungenerous and unjust in you to take advantage

of your greater liberty for the purpose of repeating counsels or decisions never destined for circulation; and prudence dictates that it is extremely hazardous to disseminate opinions or directions which, admirably adapted as they are to your personal wants, may be totally unsuited to the spiritual exigencies of those they were not designed to reach. Make it, then, your fixed principle and inviolable practice to manifest your profound respect for God's sacred institution by maintaining inflexible silence regarding it and all things connected with it.

Among the many virtues for which a good confession affords so vast a field, that of obedience holds too prominent a rank to be overlooked in these reflections, although its necessity, its merits, and its utility, are so obvious as scarcely to need even a passing comment. Like the obedience due to ordinary superiors, obedience to directors rests its foundation on the infallible word of Christ, "He that heareth you heareth me" (St. Luke x. 16). God's minister in the holy tribunal, once recognized as speaking in the name, and acting by the delegated authority of the Almighty, his direction necessarily becomes the direction of God, as surely as if an angel spoke the words. This conviction well established, arrests all cavilling, doubting, questioning, and hesitating, and on this principle, as on its

basis, rests the secure empire of obedience Firm, humble, blind acquiescence of will and judgment in a director's decisions is, no doubt, an exercise of many virtues painful to nature, but beside, that in its difficulty lies its merit, that difficulty is counterbalanced by so many advantages that the one is well worth enduring for the attainment of the other. In truth, had we no other cause of gratitude for the institution of the sacrament of penance than the security of safe guidance amidst all the perils and uncertainties of life, this alone should suffice to call forth our unceasing thanks. It is, however, quite clear, that to render the blessing available, and merit a participation in the peace of mind of which it is the source, we must utterly renounce the guidance of self, and implicitly submit to that of God's representative. To him, divine light will be abundantly communicated for our direction; and while we follow its ray we shall be quite sure not to wander, although we may not ourselves be always able clearly to discern whither our steps tend. To conclude—value the holy sacrament of penance, approach it regularly, prepare for it fervently, profit of it faithfully, and you will ensure for yourself the grace, the strength, the light, the peace, and all the other multiplied blessings of which it is the fruitful source.

Lengthened arguments to prove the utility of a frequent participation in the bread of life, would be superfluous in this little work, for you are already familiar with them. We shall confine ourselves to one, and, as in our reflections on the necessity of prayer, this one shall again be an appeal to the teaching of experience as to the different results produced by the opposite habits of frequenting and of neglecting the holy communion.

As yet, fortunately for yourself, that wisest of monitors points for you but in one direction. It has hitherto been your happy obligation to approach at stated intervals to the Banquet of angels; and your experiences are all of the inexpressible sweetness of the heavenly feast, where, in the words of the "Imitation," "sweetness is tasted in its very fountain." The days of communion have been to you festival days, in the highest and holiest sense of the term; days of calm enjoyment, days of rich benediction, days of increased spiritual strength, days of fervent and efficacious resolution to do something for Him who did so much for you, to give yourself wholly to the One who gave Himself wholly to you; to sacrifice some favourite propensity, to renounce some imperfect inclination or desire for love of the God who concealed His glory that He might abide hidden in your heart. The

days following communion have been days of renewed fervour in prayer, of greater vigilance over feeling, of more constant self-denial, of improvement in piety, of progress in all virtues. These have hitherto been your experiences of the holy communion, and, oh! treasure them carefully, cherish them fondly, that their memory may be your safeguard and preservative should you ever be tempted, as perchance you may, to turn over another page in the book of experience, and there acquire for yourselves the sad knowledge which those can teach who have ceased at any time to drink at the fountain of life,—the fountain of the precious blood of Jesus which flows for ever on the altar. Look on this suggestion if it should arise, as the most dangerous temptation of your treacherous enemy, and as such, resist it resolutely and at once. Concluding that the best guides ought naturally to be those who have once missed the way, and undergone all the anxiety and fatigue of trying to recover it through many a tortuous path, and across many a rugged steep, believe implicitly on their united and unhesitating testimony, that none ever slighted with impunity the solemn declaration of Christ, "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you" (St. John, vi. 54); and on their word also take it equally for granted,

that an experimental trial of the practical truth of that declaration would inevitably lead in your case as in theirs, only to a perilous, perhaps a fatal, deviation from the road to heaven. Since your own experience furnishes no grounds to regret the frequency of your approach to Jesus in the holy communion, while that of others, on the contrary, provides so many reasons to deplore their absence from him, determine to make your profit of both, by faithfully persevering to the end in the one course, and very cautiously avoiding the other.

If it is essentially necessary to regulate by fixed principles the order of your daily spiritual exercises, it is at least equally so to follow a definite rule regarding the frequency of your communions; that rule of course to be laid down by your spiritual director, who is to you the representative of God, and the organ of the divine will. Follow that rule with undeviating exactitude, and never swerve from it on any pretext, however plausible, or even unquestionable it may seem. The faithful observance of it will lead you securely to God; the neglect of it with equal certainty from Him.

Many dangers await you in the world on which you are about to enter; there "the concupiscence of the eyes, and the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life" hold dominion

(1 St. John, ii. 16); there, domestic and external enemies will wage fierce war against your holy determination to serve God steadily; there, many snares will beset your steps; many trials shake your resolution; and where will you find strength to maintain the conflict, if not in the Bread of life, and Manna of heaven? whence will you derive light to discover the machinations of your foes, if not from union with Him who is the light of the world? where will you obtain courage to trample nobly on human respect, if not in the divine food which fortified the glorious martyrs to despise the frowns of men, and smile at the horrors of a violent death? When terrific instruments of every species of appalling torture were displayed to intimidate the brave champions, they heeded them not, for their eyes had looked on the sacramental veils of the King of martyrs, whom, in anticipation of the coming trial, they had received into their hearts. And when, bruised and mutilated, mangled, and bleeding, they were sent back to await in their dungeons the hour of final sentence, their only desire was for the Bread of heaven; their only apprehension, lest any untoward event might deprive them of it; for in it lay their strength; and after partaking of it they seemed to have cast off the fears and feelings of ordinary mortals. Recur to the same powerful antidote against human

frailty, and you will find that it has lost none of its primitive virtue—none of its divine efficacy.

The consideration of the effects of the Blessed Eucharist, as detailed in ordinary books of instruction on the sacraments, supplies motives, at once ample, powerful, and encouraging, for a frequent approach to the source of all graces and blessings.

The first of these marvellous effects is, to give life. But what kind of life?—The life of Jesus. "He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me" (St. John, vi. 58). And what is the life of Jesus? The union of all virtues; the abstract of all sanctity; the compendium of all holiness; the sublimity of all perfection; the spotlessness of all purity—and that life it is, which the holy Eucharist communicates to us in exchange for our own. We should scarcely dare believe it, had not Jesus Himself declared the fact. "He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me." The humility of Jesus will live, where human pride held sway before; His sweet spirit of meekness will animate the heart hitherto the seat of a thousand varieties of irritable feeling; His lowly spirit of submissive obedience will claim the throne, on which the spirit of independence and the inordinate love of liberty had once reigned dominant. Oh! what a blessed exchange! The pure and holy spirit of Jesus substituted for the sinful spirit of His miserable creature! Weak

man transformed into God, and rendered in a manner divine! "Thou shalt not change me into thee; but I will change thee into me."

In the holy communion, Jesus imparts to us His life, and communicates to us of His overflowing plenitude. He comes, not to receive, but to give. Our want of Him, is our plea for approaching; our miseries are our excuse; our poverty is our claim. We desire to live by Him, and for that reason we go to Him, expecting with humble hope the fulfilment in our own wretched persons, of His most wondrous promise, "he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me." Were this the only effect of the adorable Eucharist, should it not suffice to produce an ardent wish to participate in so abundant a treasure? Should it not inspire the timid soul with unwavering confidence, and fill the shrinking heart with holy courage, and excite in the cold, indifferent spirit some little spark of loving desire?

But it is not the sole effect of worthy communion, which, secondly, beside giving life to the soul, increases her purity, and enhances her beauty. The holy sacrament strengthens her against mortal sin, and remits venial, by increasing in her the ardour of divine love, whence proceeds contrition for the least transgression. As darkness cannot exist in presence of the sun, neither can sin in the presence of Jesus. Lesser

shadows are absorbed in the beams of that eternal Sun of justice; grosser vapours forbidden to gather in its golden track—"At the brightness that goes before him, the clouds pass" (Ps. xvii. 13). Therefore it was, that St. Ambrose spoke the words so full of sweet encouragement to the timorous: "Since I daily commit sin, I must daily recur to the remedy for sin." I must daily come to the divine Physician, in the mere glance of whose eye is health; to the wonder-worker, in the hem of whose garment is salvation; to the Lamb of God, who took away the sins of the world, when, immolated for their expiation, He fastened them to the cross, as to the altar of atonement;—and coming, I shall be consoled by the welcome words which in the days of old bore healing and joy to the outcast leper: "I will, be thou cleansed" (St. Luke, v. 13).

The holy communion not only removes the imperfections which slightly tarnish the soul at the actual moment of union with the God of holiness, but it creates an atmosphere of purity around the heart which receives it frequently, and by its abiding influence weakens more and more the dominion of sin. It is certain that we find the control of our evil inclinations easier, and in a manner more natural with communion, than without it, and that we almost instinctively exercise a greater degree of self-restraint when

preparing to approach the altar, than when the day of communion is perhaps indefinitely remote. Again, were this the only effect of union with Jesus in the sacrament of His love, should not the desire of realizing it prove a sufficient stimulus to dispose ourselves to approach?

Thirdly, the holy communion lessens the strength of passion; moderates the violence of temptation; disengages the heart from creatures and from self; and elevating the soul to the contemplation of those heavenly delights of which she has had a foretaste, communicates at the same time an absolute indifference for sublunary enjoyments, which lose so considerably by the contrast. It was when holy Simeon had clasped in his trembling arms, and pressed to his throbbing heart the long Desired of the eternal hills, that he considered his mission here below accomplished, and the object of his existence fulfilled; and it is when the soul has received Jesus in the holy communion—when her arms have held Him, and her eyes have gazed on Him, and her voice has whispered into His ear, that, feeling herself endowed with riches beyond the power of earthly treasures to increase, and favoured with privileges beyond the reach of heaven itself to enhance, she, too, says with the venerable patriarch of former days: "Now, O Lord, take me to thyself in peace, for, possessing Thee,

I have nothing more to aspire to! What have I in heaven, and, beside Thee, what do I desire on earth?" Not content with mere sentiment, which so often costs but little, and ends in nothing, she resolves that no created object shall separate her from the charity of Christ, but that the sole end and aim of life shall be to insure to herself, by the practice of solid virtue, the happiness of eternal union with Him whom it must be so blissful to possess everlastingly in heaven, since it is so sweet to enjoy Him even interruptedly on earth.

Many more, and equally wondrous, are the effects which the most Blessed Eucharist produces in the heart of the worthy receiver. Thrice happy the soul which by the fervour of her preparation, the ardour of her love, and the earnestness of her desires, deserves to realize them all! Endeavour by attentive meditation to comprehend, as far as poor, weak human intellect can comprehend it, the excellence, the value, the dignity, the sanctity, the majesty of the august sacrament which can produce such fruits, and then you will require no stimulus to urge you to partake of it; you will heed no obstacle which may arise to impede your approach; you will promptly repel, as a most alarming artifice of your foe, the least temptation to abstain from communion at the suggestion of your own judg-

ment. You will go right joyfully to the Master whose wisdom is unerring; to the Friend whose tenderness is unfailing; to the Physician whose skill is infallible. You are weak, but He is strong, and He will clothe you in His strength. You are blind, but He is the light, and He will be as a lamp to your steps. You are sinful by nature, but He is essential holiness, and he will communicate to you of His sanctity. You are sorrowful, but He is the joy of angels, and He will breathe soft words of comfort into your heart. You are fearful and desponding, but He is merciful and compassionate now as in the days when He extended an almighty hand to support the tottering steps of Peter on the waves, and to you, as to him, He will say, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt my love?"

Go to Him, then, in His holy sacrament, with the same profound respect, the same strong hope, the same warm affection, as you would have approached Him, had you lived in the years of His human life, and recognised, under the veil of mortality, as you now recognize under the veil of the sacramental species—Christ, the Son of the living God. He is in every particular the same, except that His divinity is if possible more entirely hidden, that His love may be more perfectly manifested, and your confidence more thoroughly elicited. Value, as far as human

heart or mind can value it, a favour which no cherub's exalted intelligence, no seraph's glowing heart, can fully grasp. Prove that you value it, by doing all in your power not only to render yourself worthy of it, but also to profit of it most fully, according to the designs of Christ. This is a point of too great importance to be lightly passed over in our reflections on the gift of God to man in the Holy Eucharist. That gift is communicated to us in all its plenitude, yet it does not follow that every communicant receives its unimpaired fulness. Jesus gives us His divine Spirit in the holy communion, as a substitute for our own sinful spirit; but it depends entirely on our fidelity, whether or not that first grace shall fructify according to his intentions. That His Spirit may become to us the animating principle of a new existence, we must be at the pains to put it on, after first laying aside our own. He gives us his humility, but before we can clothe ourselves in the precious garb, we must sincerely determine and resolutely labour, to disrobe the heart of its pride and self-love. He gives us his meekness, but we cannot appropriate the treasure until we have first trampled on our repugnance to contradiction, our opposition to suffering, our irritable humour and impatience of control. When Jesus enters our souls in his sacrament of love, He purifies them by His mere

presence from the slightest stains of venial faults and imperfections; but we must be very careful to show our sense of the benefit by avoiding every wilful sin, however trivial; we must try always more and more to bring him no faults but such as are inseparable from the frailty of our fallen nature, and quite compatible with a sincere and steady will to serve Him very perfectly if we only could. We must truly renounce all affection to venial sin, for on this condition alone is it remitted when Jesus visits our hearts in the Eucharist. The holy communion restrains the impetuosity of passion, lessens the violence of temptation, and disengages the soul from the world and from self; but that these precious graces may fructify, they must be corresponded with by very generous and unceasing efforts to subdue the passions, to resist the suggestions of the wicked tempter, and to advance daily in the love of God, which effectually excludes the sinful love of earthly things, and the inordinate love of self. Our almighty and all-merciful Guest is ever ready to co-operate with us, but our own part must be done, and it is only by faithfully accomplishing it that we can give solid evidence of our appreciation of the gift of His Spirit and His life in the holy communion.

This constant effort to realize the most merciful views of Jesus Christ in giving Himself to

us, and to turn to practical profit the graces He bestows in communion, will be the most acceptable thanksgiving we can offer Him for the gift beyond all price, as well as the best preparation we can make for again receiving it. Prayer should of course precede and follow our communion, but the practical preparation and thanksgiving now recommended is in itself prayer of a very exalted kind. It is the homage of the creature to the Creator—the dependent creature, who unable to pay the debt she owes her sovereign Benefactor, gives what she thinks He will like best, because it costs her most, her very self: the evil propensities which have been her idols, the imperfect feelings entertwined with her nature, the affections too long lavished on the world, His enemy. She gives them in the generous spirit of entire self-sacrifice, that all obstacles to His dominion being removed, He may reign over her without impediment, and that her own life being extinct, she may be entitled to say, "I live no longer, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20), and thus are His merciful designs in coming to me fully accomplished.

It is not advisable to prolong your habitual devotions by many extra prayers on the days preceding and following communion. Endeavour to spend those days in greater recollection of mind and purity of soul; make a prayer of

every thought, word, and action, by directing each to the great act; redouble the fervour of your ordinary exercises of piety, and raise your heart very frequently to God, imploring Him to prepare you Himself for your approaching communion, or to assist you to thank Him worthily for your last. Devote some additional time on the evening before communion, to mental or vocal prayer, and continue, as you have been accustomed, to give a half an hour, if possible, before the Mass at which you are to communicate, to immediate preparation. Remember, however, that were you to devote a whole year to preparation, and during that period to think of nothing else, still would you be infinitely undeserving of an honour to which the purity of an angel and the sanctity of a Baptist are disproportioned (Imitation of Christ); and that therefore, while using your best endeavours to dispose your heart for the worthy reception of its divine guest, your whole reliance must be on God, who alone can bless these poor efforts and perfect His own work in you. Spend a quarter of an hour after communion in thanksgiving, profiting of the precious moments when God is all your own, to obtain every grace you need for yourself and others, and to secure that divine blessing which should be the first and chief object of your ambition. Do not be in haste to part from Him

who deigns to call you friend, and who delights to dwell among the sons of men. During the day, think often of Jesus in your heart. His sacramental presence has departed from it, yet it rested there but a short time before—so very short a time, that you can fancy its shadow still visible, its sweetness still perceptible. Speak softly to Him, and very, very often, were it but a word; thank Him, love Him, adore Him; be happy in only knowing that He is with you, and that wherever you go He will be your companion, and that whatever other misfortune befalls you, no one can take Him from you, unless you yourself deliberately choose to banish him from your soul by sin.

By cultivating sentiments such as these, you will insensibly acquire the spirit of prayer and the habit of recollection. One communion will dispose you for another; your preparation and thanksgiving will never degenerate into mere cold form; of whatever length may be the intervals between your communions, the fruits of communion will be permanent, its influence all-pervading. Strengthened by this supernatural food, you will be raised above your own weakness, fortified against the world's temptations, and encouraged to advance steadily and bravely along the royal way of the cross, which alone leads to the portals of the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

THIRD MEANS OF MAINTAINING THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.—DEVOTION TO THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS, AND TO THE SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY.

It has been your blessed privilege during your school days, to reside, like Mary and Joseph at Nazareth, under the very same roof with the Incarnate Word; to visit Him, corporally present in His temple, and to assist daily at the mysterious Sacrifice, wherein the Victim of Calvary is offered once more to His eternal Father, and the oblation of the cross thus perpetuated. Happily for you, the mercy of God is not limited to one particular period, nor the oblation of the all-redeeming sacrifice restricted to one particular place. In every land and clime; at every hour, from the rising of the sun to its going down; on every Catholic altar within the globe's circumference, the precious blood of Jesus mystically flows, the all-sufficient expiation is renewed, the all pure holocaust consumed. You will not then be necessarily debarred from daily visiting your Redeemer, and hearing mass, because you are about to leave the convent. Your facilities for both may not be quite so great, as

when His own sanctuary was your home by day, and your resting-place by night; yet if you understand and value the gift of God to us in the mass, you will not only think it well worth some additional trouble in the purchase, but feel that the sacrifices of a life would be too well repaid by the high honour and surpassing happiness of assisting even once at the most adorable sacrifice. Unless so circumstanced, that to hear Mass daily is a moral impossibility, or a decided infringement on the duties of your state in life, maintain inviolably the good habit on this head acquired at school, and let one of your first and strongest resolutions on leaving be to do so.

It is not within the range of any mortal's mind to comprehend the infinite excellence of the Mass. A faint idea of its value may however be formed by passing in review the wondrous benefits which accrued to the human race from the sacrifice of Calvary, and then considering that as the sacrifice of the altar is absolutely identical with it, so must the one be the source of blessings precious as those which flowed from the other. The sacrifice is in truth the same; the Victim the same; the Priest the same; the omnipotent virtue, the supernatural fruits, the divine efficacy, unchanged and undiminished. Immortal and impassible, Jesus can suffer and die no more; yet, as regards the effects to us, it is

as if He really did bleed, and agonize, and expire again each time He is immolated on the altar. His sufferings are not renewed in themselves, but in their fruits they are renewed for us, and applied to each soul separately and individually. What the sacrifice of Calvary did for the whole human race, one Mass can do for you, if you assist at it with the requisite dispositions. If you approach the altar with humility, contrition, and sincere renunciation of sin, the blood which flowed on the cross to ransom the world will flow on your soul to wash away its defilements, to heal its wounds, to enhance its beauty and strengthen its weakness.

Well then may you go gladly to the altar of God, "the God who gives joy to your youth," thence to draw down the multiplied graces of which it is the copious source; thence to extract the spiritual treasures of which it is the exhaustless mine; thence to procure a balm for all your miseries and a remedy for all your wants. Think seriously of all that you have in the wonderful and adorable Sacrifice, thus to enliven your faith, to re-animate your confidence, to inflame your devotion, and powerfully confirm your holy determination to be ever the fervent, devoted, loving adorer of Jesus, the divine Victim of the altar.

As the great debt due to God by men could

never have been discharged but for the all merciful intervention of our most gracious Redeemer, neither can our personal obligations to Him be fulfilled except through the aid of that same kind and powerful intervention. To adore God is the strictly binding duty of every Christian; it is the end for which man was created—his destiny here, and his everlasting lot hereafter. But all the homage he can render to his Creator being, like himself, finite, must necessarily be inadequate to the infinite dignity of Him it is intended to honour. How, then, shall he fulfil his obligation? How offer to God worthy and adequate homage? By uniting his adoration to that of Jesus on the altar; by assisting at Mass, and presenting before the eternal Throne the worship of the infinite Victim. Thus will he fully acknowledge God's high dominion and his own absolute dependence; thus will he worthily adore the sovereign majesty of the Deity, and perfectly comply with his solemn obligations to that effect.

Again, man owes to God not only a debt of adoration, but a debt also of thanksgiving—thanksgiving for favours, multiplied, countless, immense, infinite as the Donor. How shall he discharge that heavy debt? By hearing Mass, by offering to God in return for His mercies, His only Son, His beloved Son in whom He is

well pleased, whose merits immeasurably surpass all our obligations; one word from whose lips, one sigh from whose heart is precious in His sight beyond millions of worlds, which, with their untold wealth, are but as dross before Him in the comparison. "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxv. 12, 13); and could my debt of gratitude be even greater than it is, my obligations heavier or more numerous, still would the return be more than sufficient, because infinite.

Thirdly. We are accountable to God's justice, no less than to His mercy, and that also to a vast, an incalculable amount. That this tremendous debt must, like the rest, be liquidated, we know full well, but how? All the atonement offered for sin from its first commission to the coming of the Redeemer, could not expiate the very least transgression. Adam's protracted penance of nine hundred years, embracing, as it did, bodily labour and mental suffering, was insufficient to blot out his sin. All the tears of the human race, all the blood of the host of victims immolated from the beginning of time, could not efface the stain. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, came on earth to make the atonement which neither men nor angels could offer.

"He blotted out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, . . . fastening it to the cross;" (Col. ii. 14). He cancelled the debt; He washed away the guilt; He reconciled earth to heaven, "and broke down the wall of partition" which had separated men from God (Eph. ii. 14). Not content with that first marvellous manifestation of God-like charity, he perpetually renews on the altar the redeeming sacrifice; He places at our disposal His all-sufficient atonement, permitting us to avail fully of His precious merits, and to apply them in all their divine efficacy to our souls. What a consolation to know that I can offer for the expiation of my manifold sins that same adorable blood once spilled on Calvary for my ransom, one single drop of which would suffice to blot out the crimes of a thousand worlds! What a happiness to feel that the innocent Lamb of God who once took away the sins of men on the cross is still present on the altar, ready to take away mine also, if I only implore His pardon with humility, love, and real sorrow. Oh! how eagerly should I avail myself of the privilege! How should I long for opportunities of hearing mass! With what fervour, contrition, and gratitude should I assist at it!

Lastly, notwithstanding the multiplicity of the benefits for which we are already indebted to our heavenly Father, our dependence on Him is

so absolute, and our indigence so extreme, that we seldom can appear before Him in any other character than that of petitioners to His bounty. Holding from Him our very breath of life, equally are we dependent on His goodness for everything beside, everything of every kind, spiritual and corporal, temporal and eternal. But vile, abject, worthless, and undeserving as we are, by what right shall we venture to implore the numberless favours of which we stand in need, in the order both of nature and of grace? By no right of our own, certainly, for in truth, we have not the very least, but in right of the blood of Jesus, of his tears, of his prayers, of his sufferings, of his death on the cross. By hearing Mass fervently, and thus appropriating to ourselves and our purposes the merits of the divine Victim on the altar, we can assume the claim which in our own persons has no existence. Considering our unworthiness we might not presume to ask anything; considering the purchase-money in our hands, we never can ask too much—never ask enough. We may implore all graces, all virtues, all mercies, without reserve or restriction; we may beg of God to pour into us the abundance of his spirit and make us saints, and still we shall not exceed—still will the offering in exchange surpass in excellence and value all the benefits petitioned for.

Surely these are very sweet and consoling reflections, which cannot fail to warm our hearts with the love of Jesus, and to inspire us with profound veneration for the great sacrifice which has so justly been styled the golden key of paradise. Endeavour by meditation and prayer to understand the value of the treasure you possess in the holy Mass, and far from requiring a recommendation to hear it daily, the impulse of your own devotion will prompt you to do so; you will feel that no privation could equal that involved in the loss of a Mass, and you will think little indeed of any sacrifice by which you can purchase the happiness of assisting at one.

Prayer-books supply many varied forms of hearing Mass, and among them you can of course choose that best adapted to your own devotional feelings. Do not, however, for a moment lose sight of the identity of the sacrifice of the altar with that of Mount Calvary. Do not for a moment divert the eyes of your soul from Jesus suffering, humbled, agonizing, dying, dead. Go with him in spirit even to the mountain of ignominy, kneel at the foot of the cross, receive into your heart his precious blood as it trickles drop by drop from his nearly exhausted veins, hide yourself in his wounds, and pray for a refuge there in time and eternity. Through each of those adorable wounds ask every grace you stand

in need of for yourself, and implore mercy for all men. Remember too, that as you are associated with the minister of Christ, in offering the adorable victim to God, so should you be associated with the victim in the spirit of self-sacrifice. Offer yourself with him. Lay on the altar the oblation of your soul and body, your memory, will, and understanding; your thoughts, words, actions, and intentions of the day; your life, death, and whole being, that all may be sanctified by union with Him who is immolated for your love. Include especially in that oblation, your faults, your evil habits, your imperfect, and yet perhaps, cherished inclinations; offer all generously to God, with entire self-renunciation, that the mystic death of Jesus in his temple may produce in your soul the same fruits of conversion which resulted to so many, from the spectacle of his actual death on the cross.

Be careful, whenever you do not communicate sacramentally, to make a spiritual communion, a pious practice very strongly and generally recommended, and attended with most beneficial results. After having invited Jesus Christ spiritually into your soul by acts of faith, hope, love, and ardent desire, preceded by an act of very sincere and heartfelt sorrow for the sins and imperfections which render you unworthy to receive Him, consider Him as really present in your

heart; adore him, thank him, and offer him your petitions; above all, beseech him that the impression of his sweet presence may not leave you for the day, but that you may live, and act, and think, and speak, only under its influence. Beg his blessing, and pray that it may never depart from you, but remain as a seal on your heart, to mark that you are wholly, and for ever, His own unreserved and undisputed possession.

If circumstances render it really impossible for you to hear Mass daily, endeavour at least, as far as in you lies, to indemnify yourself for the very great privation. Desire with all the ardour of your soul that you could enjoy so great a happiness. Unite your sighs with those of the patriarchs and prophets of old, who longed with a holy eagerness for the dawning of the Orient from on high. Transport yourself in heart to some one among the many altars on which the Victim of salvation is offered, and join spiritually in the oblation, presenting to God your adorations and petitions as if you were really present, and never omit the spiritual communion, which may be made in any place, and at any hour of the day or night.

The preparation for prayer, on which so essentially depends the due performance of that great and solemn duty, you will not, of course fail in before Mass. Imagine, on your way to the

church, that you form one of the crowd who accompanied our divine Saviour in his last sad journey to death; think over some of the circumstances of that sorrowful journey, or represent to yourself the closing scene on Calvary. Before Mass begins, acknowledge your unworthiness to assist at the most holy and august Sacrifice, as well as your incapability of doing so with suitable dispositions, and beseech our Lord to inspire you Himself with the thoughts and sentiments which should occupy your mind and heart on so great an occasion.

You need not surely be reminded of the exterior reverence and interior recollection which should ever be your companions in the house of God, where truly and really dwells the Lord of all glory, surrounded by the princes of his court. Could the veil that hides that scene be drawn aside, and your eyes permitted to behold it in all its effulgent brightness, how would you prostrate to the earth, dazzled, overwhelmed, crushed down by the overpowering splendour of heaven's majesty! But why not exercise your faith, and dissipate by its clear light the obscurity of the senses? "Faith is the evidence of things that appear not," (Heb. xi. 1,) and if you appeal to its aid, it will reveal to you the existence of the wonders concealed from your corporal vision, only for your greater merit. Believing on its unerring

testimony that the God of the Altar is the Monarch of Heaven, the Lord of angels, and the Judge of men, how far will you be, while the thought holds dominion, from forgetting for a moment the respect due to his Almighty Majesty; from permitting your mind to wander; from whispering, or smiling, or looking about to recognize acquaintances, or assuming any but a reverential attitude! In you, and all instructed like you, such practices would be quite inexcusable and extremely disedifying, therefore you must never allow yourself to be drawn into them by example. The temple of the Lord is holy; it is "a terrible place; the house of God, and the gate of heaven," (Gen. xxviii. 17.) Take the angels, its invisible guardians, for your models, and contemplating them as they hide their faces with their wings in presence of the God of power and glory, bow down your soul in adoration with them, and for the time at least, forget all else, to think only of Him, whom, with the eyes of faith, you behold present on the altar.

In a little work by Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice, entitled "The Hidden Treasure," you will find some very beautiful and animating considerations on the dignity and excellence of the Sacrifice of the altar, and are therefore recommended its careful perusal. Alas! that that

adorable sacrifice should be to us a *hidden* treasure! Alas! that we should have eyes, and see not, although to us is granted to behold what kings, and prophets, and patriarchs, and saints sighed in vain to gaze on! At least, if the love of Jesus on the altar has hitherto been to you a veiled mystery, and the holy Mass "a hidden treasure," oh! let them be so no longer, lest slighted tenderness turn to anger, and grace abused call down retributive vengeance.

Love to visit our Lord Jesus Christ in his temple. Think how very frequently, or rather how habitually, he is left with no other adorers than his angels, although it was not for them, but for us, his cold, heartless creatures, that he concealed his glory, first under the veil of humanity, and next under the appearance of bread. Delight in keeping him company in his deserted sanctuary, and be assured he will repay you for the love which prompts you to visit him, by many sweet and precious favours for yourself and all dear to you. Think what a happiness it would have been to have lived in the days of our Redeemer's mortal life; to have been intimately associated with him; to have been allowed to speak to him of your wants and wishes; permitted to ask his advice in your difficulties, his direction in your perplexities, and his forgiveness after your faults;—to have listened to

his heavenly instructions; to have received his smile of approval as an encouragement to perseverance in well-doing; to have felt his words of comfort falling on your heart as dew from heaven in your trials! All this great happiness is in your reach through faith, which assures you that you possess Jesus as really in his sacrament of love, as those possessed him, whom he chose for his thrice privileged companions on earth. Profit by your high prerogative; visit Jesus frequently; pour out your heart to him with faith, with confidence, with love. Ask his light in your doubts, and his strength in your weakness; go to him for comfort in sorrow, and help in temptation, and be assured you will never be deceived nor disappointed.

Cultivate also a most tender devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; pray to it daily; try to make reparation to it by your love for the sins, ingratitude, forgetfulness, and coldness of the world. Study its virtues, especially its meekness and humility; endeavour to imbibe its sentiments, to model your own accordingly, and, by making it your asylum during life, aim at ensuring for yourself a refuge in it also at the hour of death. An asylum in the Sacred Heart of Jesus! Oh! what a high and holy object of ambition! What will you have left to desire, if once you secure *that!* What happiness is there on earth except

to love Jesus, and to be loved by Him, united to Him, devoted to Him? He, alone, can fill our hearts; can satiate their thirst, can satisfy their cravings, can appease their yearnings, can give them rest. Seek, then, a refuge in his all pure and holy Heart, the true tower of David, stronger than all your enemies; the ark of salvation, proof against the raging waters of the world's temptations; the seat of all mercy; the fountain of all goodness; the essence of all sweetness. St. Bernard says it was pierced with a lance only to give ours access to it. Enter it through that wound, inflicted rather by its own love, than by the soldier's spear; place in it all your thoughts, words, and actions, that they may be purified and sanctified; seek in it a supplement for your deficiencies, and a substitute for your incapabilities. Offer to the eternal Father, to make up for the coldness and distraction of your prayers, the petitions it poured forth in the silence of night on the lonely mountains of Judea; its supplications in the garden of agony; its piteous appeals for mercy for men on the cross. Offer the burning love and zeal which made of it a glowing furnace, to supply for your insensibility to the divine attractions, your indifference to heavenly things, your fatal self-love, which blinds your understanding and enslaves your affections. Offer its wonderful humility, its God-like patience, its

absolute self-renunciation, its obedience unto death, to make up for all your wants in these particulars. Clothe yourself in its virtues, hide your miseries under the mantle of its perfections. "Draw near to it, and you will be enlightened," (Ps. xxxiii. 6.) Fly to it when your frame is weary and your heart is troubled, and you "shall be as when one is hid from the wind, and hideth himself from a storm," (Is. xxxii. 2.) Establish your abode in it, and it will be to you as refreshing "waters in time of drought, and as the shadow of a rock that standeth out in a desert land," (Ibid.) Seek your happiness in union with it here, and you will drink hereafter at the torrent of delight, which, flowing from it as its source, inundates, from end to end, the everlasting kingdom of God's glory.

The Heart of Mary is the most perfect copy of the ever adorable Heart of Jesus, as well as the heart most intimately united to it by the bonds of love. If, then, you desire admittance to your Saviour's heart, seek it through devotion to the immaculate heart of his most dear mother. Beseech her to introduce you herself into that holy sanctuary, and let your daily prayer be that the love of Jesus and Mary may reign with undivided sway in your soul, and your heart become at last, even though at an immeasurable distance, a faithful image of theirs; its affections all subject

to God, its desires all centred in God, its hopes and wishes all tending to God, all absorbed in God, who alone is its happiness here, and will be its inheritance for ever.

Never separate in your devotions the hearts of Jesus and Mary, but present your petitions to the Heart of Jesus through the Heart of Mary, and be assured they will thus more readily find access to the throne of God. Love to pray to them, and select as one of your favourite aspirations: "Adorable Heart of Jesus, have mercy on me! Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for me!"

CHAPTER VII.

FOURTH MEANS.—DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

In adopting precautionary measures against the snares and dangers which await you in the world, you will not readily overlook the powerful aid derivable from the protection of the ever glorious Virgin; nor will you be likely to fail in trying to secure her patronage by the fervour of your love, and the earnestness of your trust. The saints have said that devotion to Mary is a mark of predestination, and they have consoled us with the assurance that none who cling to her can perish. What an easy and happy road to heaven, to love so amiable a Mother! Who can meditate on all her claims to be loved, and refuse to recognise them, or hesitate to yield to them?

It is probable that you already possess the high and holy privilege of being associated to the congregation of her "Children." If so, with what unbounded confidence should you look to her now, when more than ever you need, and more entirely than ever you depend on, her all but omnipotent assistance. To whom does the child naturally turn for sympathy in her troubles, and

guidance in her doubts, if not to the mother whose love is ever true, whose counsels are ever prudent, and whose matured experience is sure, she knows, to direct her safely through every variety of temporal difficulty? And to whom shall the daughter of Mary apply in the far more serious perplexities of her spiritual life, if not to the heavenly Mother whose goodness and power so far surpass those of any mortal mother? To whom shall she fly in her weakness, if not to the health of the infirm and support of the frail? To whom shall she speak of her alarms and apprehensions, if not to the sweet comfortress of the afflicted, and advocate of sinners? That the Mother of God should be, in an especial manner and by a particular privilege, your mother likewise; that you should be allowed to call her by that cherished name, and possess the blessed certainty that she will fulfil in your regard, all that it implies, is in itself a powerful defence against coming danger, and therefore a lively encouragement to hope that, great as that danger may be, it never will overcome your resolution to persevere to the end of life in the faithful service of God. Put on then the strong armour of renewed devotion to the Blessed Virgin, before your holy purposes have been exposed to the world's assaults, and determine that nothing shall ever induce you to lay it aside. Remember that the

glorious title of a child of Mary is not an empty sound, or the privilege of being enrolled in her confraternity a merely nominal dignity. To be the servant of Mary is an honour which even an angel might covet; for she is elevated above all the choirs of bright angels, and all the ranks of glowing seraphim. To be her child is an exaltation which eminent saints have ambitioned with a holy ardour, since the dying words of a God made man permitted them to aspire to heights which, but for those gracious words, they would not have ventured even to contemplate. Oh, value beyond gold and diamonds—beyond the world's enjoyments and sin's delusive attractions, —the happiness, the honour of the title of "Child of Mary!" Endeavour to understand every day more and more perfectly the extent of that happiness and honour, and, above all, to comprehend and faithfully fulfil the obligations you contracted on assuming so responsible a title. The first obligation of the child of Mary is, ardent love for, and unbounded confidence in her holy mother; the next is, great fidelity in executing the wishes of that holy mother, even in the least particular.

You need not be reminded of all the claims of the Blessed Virgin to your love; your heart has long ago made the record its own possession; and one of your favourite devotions has been frequently to retire with her into your own soul,

and there read a page from the cherished volume. You know, then, all those claims, less, perhaps, from the teaching of books or living instructors, than from your own experience. You need but look back on any portion of your life, and instances of the Blessed Virgin's goodness to you will come crowding and multiplying so fast, that you can only exclaim, "O Mother most amiable! pray that before I die, I may be able to do something to prove my love for thee!"

If you love her as a child loves a dear parent, equally unnecessary will it be to suggest grounds of confidence in her; your own heart will again be your prompter. You will recur to her fearlessly in all your wants; you will speak to her confidingly of your difficulties; you will lay before her your anxieties; you will consult her about your plans; you will ask yourself whether she is likely to approve of some intended pleasure or projected pursuit; you will not be deterred by your faults from going to her, but run to her then all the more, feeling that however serious they may have been, you never can despair as long as you are permitted access to her.

How consoling it is to know, that when we approach the ever Blessed Virgin in humble prayer, she does not consider our sinfulness and unworthiness, but only our wants and miseries—our very poverty being itself the surest passport

to her throne. How encouraging to feel tha none ever invoked her intercession without ob taining relief, and that often under circumstance little short of miraculous. It is not according t the ordinary rule of God's providence that a li of sin should terminate by a death of peace; ye as if to manifest the wondrous power of th Mother of clemency, and the peculiar blessin inseparable from devotion to her, the Almight has, in particular instances, granted the grace conversion at the last hour to some few individual who, although they had discontinued every oth pious exercise, and cast off every other restrain had still persevered in the daily recital of petition to the Queen of heaven, taught the by a pious mother's lips in the early days innocent childhood. Men wonder to hear the things, but they need not; for the "faithf Virgin" is never the first to desert her client and while even one tie yet binds them to he be it ever so small and so frail — no mo than a "Hail, Mary," or an ejaculation for pity- hope may still breathe, for mercy is not yet e tinct. Go, then, to her under all circumstance and at all times, and be assured, that if she reje not the sinful soul which brings to her but spark of love and a germ of confidence, she w refuse no favour to the pious heart whose devoti is boundless and whose trust is entire.

One of your first resolutions on leaving school will, no doubt, be to adhere with inviolable exactitude to the devotional practices by which you have hitherto been in the daily habit of honouring the Blessed Virgin, first and chief among which is the fervent recital of the Rosary.

A sweet legend tells of a guileless boy, who grieved much because he could not compete with his fellow-students in the composition of verses; not that he deemed the art of any intrinsic value, but that, notwithstanding his proficiency in other studies, his deficiency in this particular branch deprived him of the literary honours which he ambitioned solely for the sake of the dear mother whose hopes all centred in him as her only child. Into the heart of that gentle mother he poured the sorrowful tale of his repeated trials and attendant failures; of his master's displeasure and his companions' taunts; of his humiliations and his disappointments; and from her loving lips he learned where lay the remedy. "Remember, my son," she said, "that no one ever applied in vain for the help of the Blessed Virgin. I know you have a Rosary, though I cannot say I have often seen you use it. Take it henceforth every morning before school-hour, to the altar of Mary, and there recite it devoutly, and depend that, before long, the source of your tears will be dried, and the

cause of your dejection removed." And the prophecy was verified. In all simplicity and loving trust, the boy knelt daily at the feet of his blessed Patroness, and while his innocent heart poured out its supplication in the Rosary, her gracious eyes beamed on him in their love; her maternal heart expanded as his prayer grew warmer; a powerful mandate went forth from the lips which never opened but in words of sweetness or petition for mercy, and at once, as if by a magic spell, a marvellous transformation was wrought in his intellectual being. His imagination glowed, his ideas dilated; his whole nature seemed spiritualized. Images of superhuman beauty filled his mind, and verses of musical sweetness shaped them into words; and he who had been remarkable only for the inferiority of his position among his school-mates, now took his position high above them all, and gave promise of renown so great, that it seemed as if he had but to select at pleasure one among the many paths to literary fame so miraculously opened before him. And when he was questioned as to the manner in which the strange alteration had been effected, he merely replied, with quiet simplicity, that he had learned all he knew in the Rosary, where others might, if they pleased, learn the same; and so he came to be called "the Scholar of the Rosary." Full

well did Mary reward his artless confidence; not merely by granting him brilliant mental endowments, which in themselves are, in truth, of little real value, but in this,—that she took her pupil to her arms before he had begun to learn the lessons of an evil world, and bore away his spirit to heaven while its young innocence was yet fresh, and its baptismal purity unstained. All through the tedious illness which preceded his death, still was the beloved rosary ever twined round his fingers; and still did his heart find rest in the continued repetition of its well-loved prayers. Intent on its sacred mysteries to the last, he said, just before his eyes closed to the world for ever: "The sorrow is all gone now; there is nothing left but joy and glory." These were his last words on earth; his next were breathed in heaven, into the ear of her who had loved him so well, and proved her love so effectually.

If the scholar of the Rosary acquired human learning at the feet of his heavenly Mistress, why should we not likewise repair thither to learn a still more precious science,—the science of the saints? Why do we not also take our rosaries to Mary's throne, and conjure her with all earnestness to receive us as her pupils, teaching us how we may love and serve God; how we may overcome our faults, and triumph over temptation; how we may become strong in

virtue, and generous in self-sacrifice? We feel that it would be a great happiness to be instructed by the lips of the Queen of heaven, and led by her blessed hand into the heart of Jesus; but why do we forget that this happiness may be attained through the fervent recital of the Rosary, and why do we not avail of so easy a means of procuring access to our heavenly Instructress, and by her to her divine Son? With the vocal prayers which compose the Rosary, are interspersed pious reflections, either on the principal events in the history of Mary, or on those mysteries of the life of Christ, with which she was so intimately connected, either personally or by sympathy. By placing before us, day after day, until they have become absolutely familiar, the virtues she exercised so perfectly, and the trials she endured so heroically, the Queen of the Rosary teaches us with the eloquent voice of example, how we too may learn perfection from the consideration of her holiness, and acquire resignation in suffering from the contemplation of her fortitude. We have but to say the Rosary in the right spirit, and it will be to us an efficacious lesson of sublime virtue, and an unerring guide to high sanctity.

In the first division of the Rosary, we contemplate, first, the profound humility with which the Blessed Virgin received the announcement

of her selection from among the whole human race to be the Mother of God. We admire the beauty of that attractive virtue which Jesus and Mary both loved so tenderly; we desire that it may take deep root in our souls, and influence the whole tenor of our lives; and in reciting the appropriate decade, we conjure the most humble Virgin to impress her example deeply on our hearts; to inspire us with her lowly spirit, and to obtain for us the great grace of self-knowledge, with patient silence under humiliation and contradiction.

We next accompany our holy Model on her visit to St. Elizabeth, and as we traverse the hilly country of Judea by her side in the second decade, we meditate on the charity which prompted her journey; we grieve at our own deficiency in the true spirit of fraternal love; we ask her to teach us how to be kind in heart and gentle in manner as she was, and we pray that when she deigns to visit us by her inspirations, or to bring us her holy Infant in the sacrament of His love, our souls may be found glowing with the fire of charity, caught from constant association with her who is the Mother of holy love.

Kneeling at her side in the stable of Bethlehem, we participate in the third decade in the mingled emotions of joy and sorrow with which

she there gazed on her divine Babe; we discover that poverty, humiliation, and suffering must be something very precious, since the Incarnate God chose them for His own portion and that of His dear Mother. We pray that our hearts may ever repose in that poor stable where our treasures dwell; that we may imitate the humility, meekness, and obedience of the holy Infant in the manger, and so perfectly imbibe His spirit, as one day to merit admittance into the heavenly kingdom reserved exclusively for those who have made themselves as little children, like Him, and for His sake. We also conjure the Mother of Jesus to warm our tepid souls, and to adorn them with her own virtues, that when she brings Him to us in the holy communion, He may not find His abode colder and more comfortless than the miserable shed which first gave Him shelter.

Still kneeling in the consecrated cave, we rejoice with Mary; in the fourth decade, at the honour paid her divine Son by the holy sages from the East; we admire their prompt and generous fidelity to grace, and deplore our own sad abuse of heavenly inspiration—resolving to obey its warning voice more carefully in future. We unite our insufficient love to the burning ardours of the Blessed Virgin, and offer our humble adoration in union with the prostrate

homage of the wise men. We pray that if we cannot present costly treasures to our Incarnate Redeemer, like the kings, we may at least give Him generously, through the hands of His Blessed Mother, the little we have to bestow—our loving hearts and submissive wills; and knowing how much Jesus will prize this poor oblation, we determine not to depart from the crib until we have deposited it therein beyond recall.

Following the Blessed Virgin in her journey to Jerusalem, on the day of her purification, we enter the temple with her in the fifth decade, and filled with admiration at her humble obedience to the law, as well as at the heroic generosity with which she presents her Son and her God to His Eternal Father for our redemption, we beseech her to offer again and again to God, on our behalf, the spotless Lamb who made Himself a willing victim for the sins of the world; to obtain for us grace to devote ourselves unreservedly to the love of Him who sacrificed Himself wholly for the love of us; and to pray, that in proportion as our hearts warm with the love of Jesus, they may also increase in love for her, to whom, after God, we owe all our happiness here, and hopes of bliss hereafter.

In the second division of the Rosary we accompany our suffering Redeemer in spirit through the principal stages of His passion, from the

garden of Olives to Mount Calvary, endeavouring to enter into His spirit; compassionating His sorrows; lamenting our sins which caused them; mingling our grief with the anguish of the Queen of martyrs, and praying to her at each decade to impress our hearts with the particular virtue inculcated by the mystery under consideration. Through the agony of Jesus in the garden, we implore the grace of profound respect, unwearied fervour, and generous disengagement from heavenly consolation in prayer. Through the torment of His scourging, we ask for the spirit of mortification and self-denial. Through His crowning with thorns, we pray for sincere, practical humility of heart and mind. Through the carrying of the cross, we beg for patience under every variety of pain and suffering. Through all the combined agonies of the crucifixion, we implore the love of God and of our neighbour, especially our enemies; we conjure the divine Victim of the sins of men, to grant us true contrition for our past iniquities, with an hourly increasing horror of sinning in future; and we pray the Mother of sorrows, who was given to us as our Mother in the hour of the dying agony of Jesus, to be to us, for His dear sake, a true Mother in life and death.

In the first decade of the last division, we consider Jesus rising gloriously from the dead;

we rejoice with Mary at this happy termination to the pangs and ignominies of her well beloved Son; we send forward our thoughts to the time when we too shall rise from the grave; and we beseech her to obtain, that by now rising spiritually from the tomb of sin and tepidity, to a life of holiness and undying fervour, we may one day merit the happiness of a glorious resurrection to never ending existence.

In the second decade, we assist in spirit at the grand and solemn spectacle of our divine Redeemer's ascension into heaven; we sympathise in the grief of His holy Mother for the loss of His visible presence; we ask her to obtain that our hearts, like hers, may henceforth repose where Jesus sits at the right hand of God; and we pray that when the days of our pilgrimage are ended, the gates of heaven, opened for the sons of Adam through the merits of Christ on the day of the Ascension, may be unclosed for us through the same saving merits, and the intercession of her who is the gate of heaven.

In the third decade we contemplate the accession of grace and sanctity which the Most Blessed Virgin received at the descent of the Holy Ghost, and we earnestly beseech her to obtain that the same Holy Spirit may descend into our hearts with the abundance of his precious gifts, inflaming them with divine love, illumining them

with heavenly light, fortifying them with supernatural strength, and disposing them by docility to his inspirations, for the bliss of everlasting union with God in heaven.

We next turn our eyes to the powerful Queen of heaven and glorious Lady of earth, who on the day of her Assumption was translated body and soul to the realms of light. We gaze with love and joy on the dazzling crown which glitters on her brow, and remembering that it is less the crown of her privileges than of her virtues, we ask her with all fervour, in the fourth and fifth decades, to teach us to imitate those virtues, and strengthen us to copy her blessed example, that so we may be one day permitted to see her beauty face to face, and mingle our own crowns with the bright diadems which the saints cast at the foot of her throne.

Thus is the Rosary not merely a beautiful and efficacious form of prayer, but also a compendious lesson of all virtues; a mirror which reflects the very perfection of holiness, as illustrated first by the example of Jesus Christ himself, and next of his most faithful imitator, the Blessed Virgin.

That example is kept so constantly before our eyes in the Rosary, that we come at last to impress it on our hearts. While we pray, we steadily contemplate the great models of sanctity

proposed to our imitation, and in the act of studying the varied features of those perfect models, we pray again for grace to embody their practical teaching in our lives; addressing the petition with great confidence to her who, having been full of grace, can, we know, spare us of her abundance, and enrich us from her stores. Oh! never omit this pious exercise, which a holy writer has called a golden chain that unites the soul to Mary. Never suffer that most precious chain to be sundered; never allow even one link of it to be loosened. How you will rejoice on your death bed, if you are so happy as to find yourself bound by it to the Mother of God! How gladly you will look back, in that dread hour, to the thousands of times when, in the Rosary, you besought her to alleviate the pangs, and dispel the terrors of approaching dissolution; to pray for you and help you, when human aid and comfort will avail so little!

Now that the bright years of life are before you, death perhaps seems something so far away, that you would deem many reflections on it at the present moment altogether premature. But even admitting that the prolonged existence you so fondly anticipate actually awaits you, the end must come at last; death must come, with its final leave-taking of the world, and its last adieu to friends and pleasures; the quailing spirit must

come, and the fainting heart; the pallid cheek, and clammy brow, and livid lips; the convulsive struggle for one breath more of mortal life—yes, one, but only one; for the decree is pronounced, and none other may follow. Listen, as the ominous sound strikes tremulously on your ear; listen closely, for in that little gasp is the last frail tie to mortality; in that feeble sigh centres all now left of human existence; and when its echo has died away to the very last lingering trace, then will the wondrous machine lie still, inexhaustible as its powers now appear; while the mysterious principle which, under the name of life, once set its springs in motion, still is, and ever will be, a living principle, residing in the immortal soul which death can never reach. How wise to secure for that soul a happy transit from this world! How prudent to provide at least one source of abundant comfort at the hour of death, by the daily and fervent recital of the Rosary!

The second duty of the child of Mary is fidelity in executing the wishes of her holy Mother. The Blessed Virgin lived in her divine Son, and for Him alone; she had no thought, no affection, no project, no desire, of which His glory and love were not the only object. And she expects that her children should also live for Jesus, and not for creatures or self; that they

should seek their happiness in the service of God, and fly with horror from the service of Satan; that they should conform their conduct to the lessons of the Gospel, and never to the maxims of a corrupt world; that they should employ every means of acquiring and preserving purity of heart, and dread nothing so much as the very shadow of wilful sin.

The Blessed Virgin was a perfect model of humility and charity, and she wishes that her children should be humble in spirit and retiring in manner; that they should never desire human applause, or by word or act put forward a claim to it; that they should meekly endure contradiction and annoyance, and never occasion a breach of charity by their want of forbearance and self-control; that they should lead many to God by the example of their amiable, unselfish virtues, and never become a source of scandal or disedification, in consequence of the disparity observable between their principles and their conduct.

A child of Mary should bear some degree of resemblance to her holy Mother; it may be very faint in the beginning; yet by cultivation, prayer, and repeated efforts, it will strengthen; features of similarity, at first all but indiscernible, will gradually develope, and the likeness become, at first visible, and afterwards striking. Much exertion may be necessary for this, many severe

conflicts with nature, many difficult acts of self-denial,—but how great the reward! To attain resemblance with her who was the most perfect of mere creatures, and in whom the beauty of virtue was displayed under so fascinating an aspect; to become more and more dear to the heart of her whose heart is so tender, so kind, so loving, so worthy to be loved; to realize a closer union, even on earth, with the pure and holy being whom beatified saints deem themselves honoured in being permitted to approach with all reverence, and to secure a nearer view in heaven of the august Queen whom angels never weary of contemplating; continually to derive new light from her instructions; new strength from her example; new graces through her prayers; new facilities for virtue through her encouragement; new generosity for overcoming nature through her gentle admonitions; new peace through the influence of her unseen, yet in a manner, sensible presence; to feel that the duties of a child having been to the best of your power discharged, you may look fearlessly on your Mother's brow, and put your arms lovingly around her, and say to her, confidingly: "Oh! show thyself my Mother, for I have tried to prove myself thy child!" These are some of the fruits, some of the rewards of true devotion to the Blessed Virgin, but who could enumerate all its

blessed effects? who can understand the happiness of being truly devoted to her? Alas! few of us do, or we should set more value on that happiness; we should pray for it more earnestly, and strive for it more generously.

Let us conclude these reflections by asking our dear Mother to inspire us herself with ardent love for her, to show us how great a treasure we have in her, if we only knew how to avail of it; and when temptation tries our weakness, and sin's allurements beckon us on to ruin; when the fierce struggles of human respect threaten to bear down the opposition of conscience, and the voice of remorse begins to sound a little, ever so little, fainter, oh! let us hasten to our Mother and our refuge, and beseech her to take us by the hand, and keep us at her side, and hide us in the folds of her snow-white mantle, until the peril has passed away; nay, until the hour when all the perils incidental to our pilgrimage have vanished, and our happy lot has been secured for ever.

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God! despise not our prayers in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and blessed Virgin!

CHAPTER VIII.

FIFTH MEANS OF MAINTAINING THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.—THE FLIGHT OF IDLENESS.

AMONG the useful habits contracted during your recently expired school days, the profitable employment of time occupies so very prominent a place, that, had no other advantage resulted from the discipline to which you have of late years been subjected, this would be in itself a most valuable and precious acquisition. You must, however, remember that, like all the other good habits of early years, that under immediate consideration is intended to maintain its influence through life, and not to be laid aside as soon as the daily routine of your studies has ceased. At school, the various occupations of the day are distinctly mapped out, and a definite duty assigned to each separate hour, leaving no time for idleness, no opportunity for listlessness, no chance for indolence. Now that you are about to become, in some measure, the mistress of your time, you must be very careful to carry out the principle inculcated at school, and, although no longer amenable to its regulations, or liable to its re-

straints, to persevere steadily in the habits of industry there acquired. You must, in fact, look on the flight of idleness as one of the most indispensable means for keeping alive the spirit of faith and piety in your heart. That "for the idle, the tempter is sure to find occupation," is an aphorism containing deep truth, as you will be very likely to discover to your cost, if you once suffer him to gain admittance into your soul through the door of indolence.

You need not be told that idleness embraces, in its varied ramifications, a wider range than that which the merely literal signification of the word implies; absolute idleness, or total inaction, being but the root of a tree which produces many branches, and bears very abundant, though very noxious fruit. As it is quite possible to fall into mistakes on this important point, and to identify indolence only with entire cessation from occupation, it may be useful to consider the fatal vice in some of its modified forms, and under a few of its varied disguises, that you may be enabled the more readily to recognize it in all shapes, and, consequently the more cautiously to fly from its pestilential influence. With a very little reflection, you will easily discern so many off-shoots of the poisonous parent plant, in the habits of listless lounging, long reveries, useless talking, unnecessary visits, idle correspondence, and unrestrained

novel reading, to each of which we shall now direct a brief notice.

Listless lounging, although not exactly synonymous with a premeditated determination to squander time, may nevertheless, in all truth, be qualified as idleness, and that, too, of a very decided character, though, unfortunately, it does not always excite the internal reproach it so well deserves. In its origin, it may perhaps be traced in general to want of system in the distribution of the day's duties and occupations. These being left to chance, rather than arranged by fixed method, the time which should be spent in action is frittered away in considering what that action is to be; meanwhile, because the vague intention of shortly seeking employment seems to refute the charge of deliberate idleness, the conscience is tranquillized—although nothing is actually done—by the anticipation of all that soon *will* be accomplished, and so, habits of lounging are allowed to progress, until they settle at last into habits of confirmed idleness.

Sometimes, again, it happens, that systematically as the duties of each hour may have been arranged in theory, that arrangement is departed from in practice, either wholly or in part. The occupation assigned to a specified hour is deferred or neglected, and no other substituted, or perhaps it is performed in so apathetic a manner,

that for any practical result, it might as well have been left undone. Shorter or longer intervals are suffered to elapse between every change of pursuit; a considerable time is wasted on what might with diligence have been accomplished in a short period—the hours of action are thus curtailed; the energy of the mind weakened; the rule of life slighted; the tendency to listlessness strengthened; precious time lost, and a rapid impetus given to the growth of that most rank weed, idleness.

Earnestness is the corrective of listlessness, and the antidote to indolence in all its branches; and as such, you cannot too highly estimate its utility, or too diligently devote yourself to its culture. Earnestness is not to be confounded with uncalculating ardour, unreflecting precipitation, or impulsive eagerness, to all of which it is as much opposed as it is to languid listlessness. Impetuosity, or impulsiveness, is the result of natural temperament, and unless it be subjected to the control of reason, it is but another name for caprice, dependent on every variety of humour, and frequently leading, in its indulgence, to consequences which cool common sense condemns, and good feeling deplores. It is so unwise and unsafe a guide, that its promptings should not be obeyed even when they seem to tend to good, until they have first been tested by the clear

light of a calm, dispassionate judgment. Earnestness has nothing in common with impetuosity, which obscures the reason, or precipitation, which impedes its free exercise. It is the quiet, steady purpose of a will intent on accomplishing at the right time, and in the most careful manner, the duty assigned; it is the constant recognition of, and practical adherence to the maxim, that whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well; and that as nothing can be done well, which is not done according to order, a fixed rule of life, and never whim or impulse, must be the guiding principle of the day. To be in earnest, is to be fervent in prayer; active in charity; self-sacrificing in social intercourse; diligent in study; alive to, and ready to avail of every precious opportunity of improvement; and ready, too, to enter fully, in due season, into all permitted enjoyments. To be earnest, is to proceed promptly from one pursuit to another, losing no time in pondering on what is next to be done; leaving no unoccupied intervals between; never deeming fragments of time too small to be filled up; never saying, "It is not worth while to take up an occupation now, for I have but a few moments to dispose of." Any one who reflects that she must one day render an account of every separate moment of her life, will never feel that even one is too insignificant to be worth profiting of.

Moments have been called "the gold dust of time." If you can understand the force of the expression you will not fail in making the right application of it. To be earnest, in fine, is to understand the value, not only of your own time, but also of the time of others, and, therefore, to be punctual, not alone to your personal duties, but also to your appointments; never to keep persons waiting, especially those whose time is to them their livelihood, and who may be materially the losers by want of punctuality in their employers. There is much practical wisdom in the recommendation to be always able to say at the end of the day, not what you proposed and planned to do, but what you actually have done. If, at the day's close, you thus can lay before your conscience the tangible fruits of its exertions and occupations, you will prove that you have been earnest, and will be very safe against the inroads of apathy, indolence, and listlessness.

The long, vague reveries in which it is the delight of some minds to indulge, constitute another and a very dangerous species of idleness. The mind is, no doubt, very actively engaged at such times, yet, its occupation being not only essentially useless in itself, but absolutely pernicious in its consequences, its state is, in truth, one only of busy idleness. Day dreams usually

embrace some fanciful speculation, some chimerical project, some ideal adventure connected with the uncertain future, and, as they deal wholly or chiefly with phantoms, they tend to strengthen the power of the imagination, and to weaken the influence of calm, cool reason, thus involving other and serious evils, in addition to loss of time. If you try always to remember your obligation to love God with your whole mind as well as with your whole heart and strength, you will be equally impressed with the necessity of regulating your thoughts according to reason and religion, and, consequently, of excluding those useless retrospections of the past, and vain anticipations of the future, which, if indulged to excess, degenerate into a very dangerous species of mental idleness, and, moreover, preclude the possibility of attending diligently even to purely mechanical occupations, since nothing can be done well with an abstracted mind.

Were it our present purpose to trace in all their details the evils wrought by the unrestrained exercise of the tongue, we could but have recourse to the holy words of divine inspiration, which alone do justice to the works of that "world of iniquity." Those awful evils do not, however, enter, in their general bearings, into the immediate view of the subject, which deals

chiefly with the fearful loss of time entailed by an immoderate love of talking—classed for that reason among the branches of idleness. When, at the close of the day, an account is taken of the moments squandered in useless talking by a person much addicted to it, how alarming is even the imperfect sum total which her most accurate calculations can enable her to lay before the tribunal of conscience! With every one she encountered, she entered into conversation, on every one who crossed her path she fastened, to pour out the intelligence gathered on her way, and to add still further to the information destined for yet wider circulation. A great part of her day was spent in parading the streets, or paying idle visits, with a view to glean the particulars of her neighbours' private affairs, and render herself conversant with the public rumours of the hour, thus to minister to her insatiable love of news, the offspring of that curiosity which she shares in common with all great talkers, and at the same time, to gratify her thirst for gossip, and her desire to kill time. Oh, how has her precious day been squandered! And if such be her habitual method of disposing of it, how will she dare to meet her Judge when her last day arrives at length! Wonderful will it be if, at the close of such a day, she has not other and greater sins than loss of time to answer for!

Miraculous, indeed, if charity and truth have escaped a serious wound! And even supposing this possible, what has become of prayer? What of home duties? What of the obligation to lead a useful life? Oh! terrible will be the discoveries of the habitual talker when the illusions of life are dispelled, and conscience raises its clear, calm voice on the confines of eternity! Great her alarm when the book of doom is opened, and an account demanded of every useless word her lips have spoken! (St. Matt. xii. 36.)

You are not now, of course, required or expected to observe silence, as when it formed one of the most essential of your school regulations, yet it surely would be a mistake to imagine that, because no longer subject to the discipline of school, you are at liberty to converse at all seasons, and on all topics, without restraint or control. If you do not acquire the power of governing your words in indifferent matters, be assured you will not attain the mastery over them in points involving sin. If you indulge the habit of talking freely at all times, you will, necessarily, very often talk at random. If you allow yourself to give expression to every thought that flits across your mind, to repeat every word of news you have heard, to take part in every argument, to give your opinion on every point, to discuss personalities, to retail gossip, and busy

yourself with the concerns of others, you will find at the end of the day that you have approached with very dangerous proximity to the verge of detraction; that you have lost a considerable portion of time; that you have wholly neglected some duties, and performed the rest very ill; that you have indisposed yourself for prayer, opening the door to a variety of distractions; and if you have wonderfully escaped sins of the tongue, you will at least be compelled to own yourself accountable for many indiscretions. If such be the sad results of merely idle and useless words, how should you dread a habit which too surely leads in addition to the far more fatal evil of positively sinful ones.

There are, of course, certain periods in the day when silence, far from being advisable, could merit only severe condemnation. For instance, at the regular hours of social family meeting, destined to be enlivened by cheerful conversation, silence would be wholly misplaced, and highly reprehensible, as the effect of singularity, or perhaps ill-humour. Again, in visits of courtesy, kindness, or ceremony, taciturnity would be equally unseasonable, as well as ungracious and ill-bred. On these and similar occasions, it becomes a duty and an exercise of virtue to speak; and if you are careful not to allow yourself the habit of talking unrestrainedly at home and

abroad, at all hours of the day and on all kinds of subjects, you may be very sure that your spiritual interests will suffer no detriment from the conversations carried on at right times, on allowable topics, and under suitable restraints.

It is not advisable to converse unnecessarily before morning, or after night prayers. Your morning devotions cannot be discharged with due respect and recollection if you allow idle words to introduce distractions beforehand; and as we should look on sleep as an image of death, and never resign ourselves into its arms without remembering that our awakening may be in eternity, we should endeavour that our last conscious thoughts be of God, and our last words a prayer. The habit of talking after withdrawing to your room at night will necessarily induce the temptation to retire late to rest; and in compensation, the morning hour will be encroached on, and the religious exercises which should commence the day will be either omitted or abridged and hurried over: so many good reasons for observing silence after your night prayers. To conclude, if you early require the blessed habit of thinking always before you speak, and suppressing every remark which reflection says it would be best to refrain from, you can scarcely estimate the number of faults you will avoid, the varieties of imprudences and consequent em-

barrassments you will escape, the peace of heart and tranquillity of conscience you will enjoy, and the amount of precious time you will save for high and holy ends.

A great deal of valuable time is lost by some young persons in idle epistolary correspondence, which being with them merely the medium of silly gossip, and the circulator of a vast quantity of—to say the best of it—unprofitable news, can be only considered a modification of idle talking. When politeness, kindness, necessity, or utility, claims any portion of your time for letter-writing, the time so spent is, of course, to be considered as usefully employed. Your correspondence then becomes a duty; and looking on it as such you should attend to it carefully, answering letters punctually and to the point, referring, as you write, to the epistle to be answered, that you may not overlook essential remarks or enquiries, and so render your replies partially useless; and avoiding both those long superfluous details, and totally irrelevant, if not frivolous topics, which consume the time both of the writer and reader, and so often render letter-writing absolute idleness.

You will not perhaps, at first sight, be disposed to admit the claims of novel reading to a place on the list of the branches of idleness. Idle talking, you will say, is clearly loss of time, and so is listlessness in all its forms; but reading—

surely reading must always be employment—food for the mind, and occupation for time. Yes; but sometimes poisonous food, dangerous employment, worse than useless occupation.

It is argued, in favour of novel reading, that works of fiction of the present day are, in their general character, so correct in principle, so unexceptionable in narrative, sometimes even so high-toned in morality, and in the case of some particular authors, so finished in style and rich in the varied beauties of good composition, that they may be perused not only without injury, but actually under some aspects with positive advantage. As clever delineations of character, too, they are said to afford so deep an insight into human nature, and so profitable a knowledge of the world and its ways, as to be in those respects a useful study for the inexperienced.

There can be no doubt of the vast improvement of the present period in that description of literary production, emphatically called light. We know by hearsay, if not by personal inspection, that the romances of former days were not calculated to promote the health either of mind or heart; and that they should have been superseded by fictitious works of a more refining tendency and a more enlightened character, cannot but be deemed an advantage. Yet, according to modern novels all the merit they can possibly

claim, and viewing them under their very best and most favourable aspect, they are, in many ways, to say the least, extremely dangerous.

Novels are, in general, pictures, and usually very highly wrought pictures of human passions; and it has been remarked, that although the conclusion of the tale frequently awards signal punishment and degradation to some very gross offender, yet, that in a far greater number of instances, passion is represented as working out its ends successfully, and attaining its objects even by the sacrifice of duty; an evil lesson for the heart yet unacquainted with vice, and uncontaminated by the world. It may, indeed, be safely questioned whether the knowledge of human nature thus acquired is of a profitable kind, and whether experience of life might not, for all practical purposes, be derived from other and purer sources than the teaching of romances.

Again; novels as a class present false views of life; and as it is the error of the young to mistake these for realities, they become the dupes of their own ardent and enthusiastic imaginations, which, instead of trying to control and regulate, they actually strengthen and nourish with the poisonous food of phantoms and chimeras. When the thirst for novel reading has become insatiable, as with indulgence it is sure to do, they come at last to live in an unreal fairy land amidst heroes

and heroines of their own creation, thus unfitting themselves for the discharge of the common duties of this every-day world, and for association with every-day mortals. The more strongly works of fiction appeal to the imagination, and the wider the field they afford for its exercise, the greater in general are their perilous attractions; and it is but too true that they cast, at last, a sort of spell over the mind, so completely fascinating the attention, that duty is forgotten, and positive obligation laid aside to gratify the desire of unravelling to its last intricacy, the finely-spun web of some airy creation of fancy. Fictitious feelings are excited ; unreal sympathies aroused; unmeaning sensibilities evoked; the mind is weakened; the taste for serious reading and profitable occupation is destroyed; all relish for prayer is lost; and, at last, conscience and common sense resign their desecrated sceptre to the dominion of unchecked imagination. In addition to their other disadvantages, many of these books, unfortunately, teem with maxims subversive of simple faith in, and cordial reverence for, the truths of religion; and so it but too frequently happens, as the climax of evil, that faith suffers to a greater or lesser extent from their habitual, indiscriminate perusal.

As a mere recreation, light works may, of

course, be occasionally resorted to; but so many and so great are their attendant dangers, that extreme care should be taken to neutralize their poison by infallible antidotes. Novels being in their general character calculated only to mislead and injure, they should never be read indiscriminately, but the selection left always to a religious parent, or judicious, intelligent, and pious friend. They should never be made an occupation, but merely serve as a pastime, and that occasionally. They should never be perused in the early part of the day, but only in the evening hour, specially laid aside for relaxation. They should never be continued beyond the moderate length of time to which, under prudent and pious direction, you have limited yourself; never resumed after night prayers, and never read on Sundays. They should not be allowed to engross the mind, to the exclusion of all other thoughts, but most especially during their perusal, should the sweet, refreshing, invigorating thought of God's presence be often recalled, and an aspiration ascend to His throne, that He, who is the author of all the happiness we enjoy, may bless and sanctify even our amusements, and preserve us in His mercy from ever seeking or finding gratification in any but the innocent pleasures He Himself allows and approves.

The observance of the conditions now enumerated, no doubt, requires some self-control, but if you cannot exercise that self-control, neither can you expect to peruse works of fiction without material, perhaps fatal, injury to your precious soul. If you cannot exercise that control, never either should you read novels. If there be one more than another of these conditions to which you are recommended inviolable fidelity, it is the first. By referring for direction in your reading to a pious, sensible, and experienced guide, you will be secured against unwarily making your selection among that class of fictitious works, which, impregnated with the venom of anti-Catholic maxims and anti-Christian opinions, should be to you books for ever sealed—objects of absolute and unmitigable horror. And as the spirit of impiety and infidelity, so prevalent in the literary world, seeks a medium for the communication of its venom, no less in works of science than in purely recreative volumes, you will find the advantage of applying the foregoing rule in the one case as in the other, never reading a suspected author, without having first ascertained how far your doubts are well founded. The use of this wise precaution will also be your security against those productions of inferior taste and frivolous feeling, whose very insipidity and silliness ought certainly to

deprive them of all charm for a refined and cultivated mind. And, again, as the danger of novel-reading depends nearly as much on the character of the reader as the nature of the novel—if you possess one of those enthusiastic temperaments and excitable fancies likely to be injured by too strong an appeal to the imagination, you will be prohibited the dangerous indulgence, and, perhaps, secured from the precipice to which novel-reading too often paves the way.

The character of fictitious works is said to have improved, but so, likewise, has that of all other classes of literature in far more than equal proportion. The literary resources of the rising generation are so ample, and books at once improving and entertaining so abundant, that you can be at no loss for safe, and, at the same time, amusing reading; and have, therefore, the less necessity or excuse for seeking recreation in novels. It is a certainty, that the habit of useful reading gradually destroys all desire for the perusal of fiction, and renders it absolutely insipid. If you can determine, in the beginning, to exclude novels from your list of amusements, you will very soon come to feel more than indifferent about them; if you cannot, remember, at least, the restrictions under which alone they can be perused with comparative safety.

But in what consists the peculiar value of time that you are thus strongly warned against the danger of squandering it? In this—that on time hangs eternity; on the use made of the present life depends your fate for the everlasting life to come. You were sent into this world for the accomplishment of a certain definite work, to be completed within a certain given time. That work is the salvation of your soul; the period assigned for its completion comprises the years of your temporal existence, after which the night cometh, in which you must necessarily cease to labour, for then no man can work. If you try to understand the momentous importance of that great work, and the magnitude of the consequences involved in its success or failure, you will also readily comprehend the price of every precious opportunity of ensuring it a happy issue. The time of action is limited; every year as it rolls over our heads, every day as it flows on to mingle with the tide of eternity, nay, every moment, as it glides away from us almost imperceptibly—its life so brief as scarcely to seem a reality—each is bringing us nearer and nearer to the limit beyond which we cannot journey. If time is composed not only of ages and years, not only of months and weeks and days, but even of short vanishing moments, flying away on the air we breathe: and again, if time

means for each of us our allotted number of those fleeting moments, it follows, that each one of them, as a constituent part of the great whole, has its own individual character, bears its individual value, stands invested with its individual responsibility, and atom though it be, is destined to contribute its aid towards the perfecting of the work given us by our heavenly Father to do. From their dawn to their close, our lives belong to God, absolutely and exclusively. He made us for His glory, and He is too jealous of its interests to permit that we devote the existence he bestowed to any other end than that he himself ordained. We are not then to fancy that we may dispose of our time as best suits our inclination or caprice, for God is its master, and His will must regulate its employment. That will we discover in the duties attached to our condition in life, and in the lawful requirements of our social position.

As yet, the designs of the Almighty regarding your ultimate place in the great human family are probably unknown to you; and as the knowledge of those designs is a subject of too serious importance not to demand prolonged prayer and very mature reflection, as well as prudent counsel, it is quite likely that a considerable period will intervene before you become bound by the positive duties of a definite state in life;

but that interval is not to be lost. It is a peculiarly precious, and at the same time, a peculiarly critical one. On the use you make of it, possibly depends much of your future, whether for perseverance or decline in virtue. If you begin by throwing off the yoke of self-restraint, by performing your spiritual exercises irregularly, by consulting your ease of mind or body, by indulging indolence, by suffering any considerable portion of your time to pass in idleness, by slighting your rule of life, it needs no seer's prophetic vision to discern, or warning voice to predict, that your resolution to lead a Christian, useful life has not long to survive. The transition state between your departure from school and your final exchange of the home of your childhood, for the more permanent home hereafter to be allotted to you in the decrees of Providence, has duties and responsibilities of its own; duties and responsibilities to God, to your neighbour, and to yourself. The neglect of those duties would most surely entail on you the fearful lot of the slothful servant who overlooked his master's interests, and suffered the talent committed to him to lie idle, while, on the other hand, their diligent and conscientious discharge will ensure you the benediction granted to the good servant, who having employed his time profitably, and been faithful over a few things,

was placed over many, and summoned to a share in the joy of his Lord. As it is your holy ambition to participate for all eternity in that overflowing joy, so is it of course your pious determination to render yourself deserving of it by the perfect accomplishment of the duties assigned you by your divine Master; duties to which we shall direct our more particular attention in the ensuing chapters.

CHAPTER IX.

FIFTH MEANS.—THE PROFITABLE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

In our reflections of the last chapter on the flight of idleness, a cursory allusion was made to the necessity of a systematic distribution of the day's occupations, as a very useful, if not an indispensable preservative against the inroads of indolence. As this subject is one of great importance, a few additional words on it may not be superfluous here.

It is not, of course, possible, practically to follow out a rule of life to the strict letter, as many casual impediments to its observance must necessarily arise, and even positive duties sometimes interfere with adherence to it. Yet it is essential to draw up such a rule, and very important to attend to it as far as attainable. The very attempt to observe it will maintain some degree of system in your day's pursuits; the desire, when the attempt fails, will keep up a remnant of self-restraint; the mere recognition of so powerful a check on idleness and caprice, will strengthen that vivid sense of accountability for

every moment of your time, which it should be your aim never to lose; and when no other actual good results, you will be so far a gainer, that knowing exactly what particular occupation demands your attention at each hour, you can turn to it promptly, when disengaged from more pressing claims, without losing time in considering about the selection. One point at least is clear—that if *with* a rule of life you find it difficult to manage your time profitably, and apportion it systematically, you assuredly will find both incomparably more difficult *without* one; consequently, if you are in serious earnest in your determination to lead a useful life, you will not omit this salutary precaution.

Your time, as you have already seen, belongs to God, not to yourself; therefore, in drawing up your rule of life, and assigning to each hour its definite occupation, you are constantly to bear in mind the great principle, that conscience, not whim, is to be your guide; and that your day is to be devoted, not to the gratification of natural inclination, but to the discharge of your duty to God, your neighbour, and yourself—that thus it may be truly a well spent day; a day entitled to be inscribed in the Book of Life.

In regulating your hour of rising—the first duty of the day—remember, that as the manna of old was gathered only by those who sought

it before the sun's rays had attained sufficient power to dissolve the mysterious substance; so the precious manna of prayer—its sweetness, its recollection, its abundant consolations, its full, rich harvest—will be yours only on condition that you begin the day by a victory over sloth, and sacrifice to God, instead of to His enemy, the morning's first, prized fruits. Fix your hour of rising very steadily, and observe it punctually, unless sickness, or some other good reason, sanction an occasional deviation from it.

Your spiritual exercises, as the tribute directly due to God, clearly claim your primary attention in the distribution of your time; be careful, then, to assign them the prominent place they merit, and to ensure for each a fixed hour, under the circumstances most likely to facilitate its careful and fervent discharge.

But although the most important of all your duties, prayer is not your only duty. God requires that we consecrate to Him all our days and all our lives; but He does *not* require that we spend them in actual prayer; He only demands that prayer of the heart should accompany our other pursuits; that purity of intention should consecrate, and the frequent remembrance of His presence, with an ejaculatory prayer for His help, sanctify them. You must carefully avoid the error of those who imagine their piety

solid and their state secure, provided they daily accomplish a certain habitual routine of devotions, read a pious book, and go frequently to confession, without meantime correcting a fault, acquiring a virtue, or performing one act of charity towards their fellow-creatures. You must ever remember that God not only permits, but actually imposes certain active duties, which will always tend to our advancement in virtue, if we perform them in obedience to His holy will. First in importance among these, are your home duties, and next, those included under the head of charity to the poor. The details of both shall engage our attention in future chapters; as regards their connexion with the subject of this, it suffices to observe that the time spent in their fulfilment is time most profitably and meritoriously employed. That which remains being at your own command, you must be cautious to dispose of it to equal advantage; and here especially it is that your rule of life is needed, and if faithfully followed up, likely to be most useful.

You do not, of course, fancy that, because your school days are over, all self-improvement has ceased to be necessary, and may be quietly laid aside. Our whole life is a species of school training—training of our immortal faculties for their grand ultimate destiny—union with God,

first on earth, and then in heaven. It is not only by meditation on heavenly things that this process is carried on; prayer is, no doubt, the first, yet only one of the means appointed for that great work of spiritual training. The mind is always susceptible of enlargement; its cultivation, of which school is but the beginning, should be carried on continuously. The more widely it roams in the illimitable fields of useful knowledge, the more capable will it become of rising to God on wings of love, and gratitude, and admiration. And, again, the more highly its powers are cultivated, the greater and more varied will be its internal resources; the more ample its facilities for communion with itself; and, consequently, the less its need to seek amusement in frivolity, in silly gossip, in idle talking, or idler reading—all which tend, more or less, if not to separate it from God, at least, considerably, to weaken the impression of His divine presence, and diminish its capability of conversing with Him. Thus, directly and indirectly, the cultivation of the mind, rightly understood, and rightly pursued, tends to dispose it more and more for union with its great Creator.

And, oh! how marvellously do the wonders of science proclaim the glory of God, and manifest his greatness, not as it is, for in its own nature our poor minds could not grasp it, nor

our feeble vision look steadily on its splendour, but in part—in faintest image—perhaps, in shadow only; yet, faint as is the image, it is full of loveliness, and dense as may be the shadow, the sunlight of God's presence gilds it, as the light of the material sun pierces the vapour, and turns it to gold.

Take, for instance, the noble science of astronomy, and, under its guidance, plunge into the world of space which encompasses you, and, lost in the contemplation of its varied wonders —awe-stricken at its bewildering magnitude— you will realize, perhaps, more vividly than you ever did before, the grandeur of the Omnipotent Creator, and the boundlessness of His attributes. Ascending, on the wings of thought, into the vault of heaven, your attention is first arrested by the monarch of our system, there enthroned in his aërial palace. To form a notion of his dimensions, you have to imagine a globe so enormous as to fill, not only space equal to that enclosed within the orbit of the moon, but in addition an interval beyond the orbit nearly as great as that within—to acquire an idea of the extent of surface covered by that gigantic solar disc, you have again to set imagination on the stretch, and endeavour, by its magic aid, to picture to yourself an area comprising two billions and a-half of square miles! But scarcely can

even over-taxed imagination embrace a field so mighty! Vainly do your dazzled eyes attempt to rest on that world of glory—its bulk exceeding that of the earth by more than a million of times; its circumference so great that, to travel round it, would require eighty of our years, at the rate of ninety miles a day; one mere spot on its surface measuring fifty thousand miles in diameter, another twenty-three thousand! The soul dilates at the thought of space so vast, yet this is but the beginning of the journey into the limitless regions above. From the sun, cross one after the other to the planetary tracks, separated, as they are, by millions of miles; contemplate, as you proceed, the worlds of space lying within the orbit of each sun-lit wanderer through the heavens, as well as the mighty chasms dividing each particular pathway from the next in succession. When you reach Uranus, eighteen hundred millions of miles will separate you from the sun. To enable you to estimate the size of the orbit described at that inconceivable distance from the central luminary, you are told, that had a body been set in motion at one of its extremities at the time of man's creation, it would yet be far from the opposite point, though urged on since incessantly, at the speed of fifty miles an hour. Press onwards still, until the remotest of the planets arises

before you, thousands of millions of miles away from sun and earth; beyond that extreme orbit lies a gulf that numbers cannot measure, and thought can scarcely span ; and on the confines of the abyss, far above the revolutions of planets and comets—far away, incomprehensibly far—you will meet a new system—another portion of God's great universe—the world of stars, glorious suns, all but infinite in number, immense in magnitude, refulgent beyond the power of fancy to imagine, one of them equal in intrinsic brightness to two—another to fourteen or more —of the suns of our firmament; and yet so distant, so inconceivably distant, that they seem to earth but as little shining atoms, caught from some wandering sunbeam, and launched, tremulous and bright, to twinkle and glitter in the azure dome above. Still pressing onward, higher and higher ever, you will meet, at last, another system, the remote star system, emphatically styled "star dust," because of the impossibility of resolving it by any yet discovered power of artificial vision into a shape more definite. You will find that the golden globes of the far-off skies are not only divided from the planetary orbs by immeasurable space, but separated, in like manner, from one another; that stars which, to the unassisted eye, appear single, are discovered on inspection, by the tele-

scope, to form systems of two, three, four, or more suns, linked together by some mysterious bond; that, in addition to their other glories, the multiple stars present the beautiful phenomenon of variety of tints in the light emitted; that, in obedience to the laws imposed by their great Creator, they perform certain revolutions in certain periods, ranging, in the case of those binary stars which have as yet been accurately observed, from forty to twelve hundred years. As periodic time necessarily keeps pace with size of orbit, well may you start at sight of the mighty path which centuries are needed to travel over. Well may you bow down, and adore, as you find the mind's vision bounded, wherever it attempts to rest, by interminable space; fields of space stretching around; chasms of space yawning beneath; unfathomed gulfs of space seeming to swallow up the very soul; so that, overwhelmed, prostrate, in the presence of infinity, one distinct thought alone is left to it, one ejaculation into which to resolve that thought—"O Lord! how great are thy works!" (Ps. xci. 6.) "And how vast is the place of thy possession!" (Baruch, iii. 24.)

Who can study the wonderful lessons of the science of astronomy, even in its simple elements, and not feel that God is mighty and glorious! Great, we know, must be the Creator who drew

from nothing this beauteous world of ours; but oh! how our notions of his grandeur expand; how our ideas of his majesty rise and enlarge, as if our limited minds could not contain them, when we discover that this world is but one of countless myriads of worlds; that the system to which it belongs is but one of unnumbered systems; that the stars which look at us with their bright eyes, as if to remind us that immortal souls destined to outlive even their glories, should ever tend upwards, and never grovel on earth—are but scattered samples of multitudes of similar suns beyond, unseen as yet, and perhaps destined to remain for ever unseen by mortal eye; that the many-shaped nebulæ, which appear no more than patches of luminous matter, form, in truth, clusters of stars, many of them counting ten or twenty thousand bright suns within their comparatively confined limits; that the mysterious comets, which now and then come into view, as if merely to add a new feature to the magnificent variety of the heavens, are, like the other tenants of space, innumerable! Our poor, finite minds swell, as one grandeur after another is developed. God's greatness arises visibly before us, as the wonderful works of His hands strike on our vision. The shadow of His immensity envelopes our souls, as we send a timid glance into the deep world which has no boun-

dary but infinity, and yet is filled to its remotest extremity by His presence. A glimmering of His loveliness dawns on our spirits, when we recollect that all the splendour of the suns of the universe, and all the beauty of the skies, bathed in the liquid light of early morning, or clad in the cloudless azure of summer mid-day, or painted in the glowing hues of evening, or studded with the sparkling gems of night, are, in their united light and beauty, but an image—a faded image—of the glory which was bright before created light was known, and the beauty that was fair, ere yet it had impressed its outlines on material things.

The study of the wonders of the skies tends to inspire knowledge of self, as well as knowledge of God. In view of our Maker's majesty how small we feel!—so very small, that did not Faith assert the contrary, we might very naturally deem ourselves too insignificant for His notice. Self-esteem cannot find room in a soul which has deeply studied the lessons of God's greatness; and thus it happens, that human science, so pride-inspiring when pursued in the spirit of blind self-conceit—so perilous when followed up as an end, and not as a means, becomes to the heart that loves God, and seeks in study only how it may know Him better, a source of increased humility. The farther it extends its

researches, the more profoundly does it humble itself in view of that abyss of eternal wisdom in whose depths its own atom of information is absorbed as a drop of water in the ocean; the more deeply does it adore the everlasting Source of all knowledge; the more cordially does it confess its own ignorance and blindness, darkness and incapacity.

Yet, while that heart feels itself but a mere speck, a very atom in the midst of God's vast universe, it knows, that atom as it is, it has a place to fill in that great system—a part to accomplish. It knows that He who marked for each twinkling star its peculiar dwelling place in the sky, and traced for each wandering planet its individual pathway on which none other must encroach, has destined it to subserve certain ends, and in its own small way to contribute to the order of the great whole. From this conviction arises a new impression—love for Him, who though so good, disdains not to occupy His eternal mind with its concerns, and prodigally to provide for its wants; and in proportion as its love grows warm, so does its disengagement from created things increase, and its desire of union with the everlasting Fountain of all being gain strength. And when the petty vexations, or perhaps the real cares of life press heavily on it, how calming to its irritation, how soothing to

its sorrow, to ascend in spirit among the shining orbs above, and leaving earth's turmoil far behind, realize in that silent solitude how small are in truth the pains to which a nearer view lends imaginary magnitude. "How insignificant this world appears," it exclaims with St. Ignatius, "when I look at the heavens!" How great, how glorious, how good is God, and how little and worthless is all beside Him!

The inferences to be deduced from the other sciences are precisely similar. Take, for instance, the interesting subject of light and its properties, and with the lamp of religion for your guide, you will see how closely interwoven with every line of its teaching, is the greatness of God, and His goodness to His creatures. You will be told at the onset of the study, that the precise nature of light cannot be satisfactorily defined, although learned and ingenious theories have been formed to account for its origin. But while interested by those theories, and perhaps astonished at the amount of investigation they display, you will be satisfied to learn from the holy words of divine inspiration, that it was the power of God which drew forth the light from some deep fountain of splendour called into being by His word, and His paternal hand which sent it forth on its mission of mercy to man—not only a harbinger of gladness, but a rich dispenser of substantial

blessings; and happy in feeling that it was no other hand than His that bestowed a gift so precious, you will proceed with redoubled interest to inquire how far it has added to your happiness, or contributed to your welfare. What does science tell you on the subject? That without light, and an atmosphere adapted like our own to reflect and refract its rays, we should have no soft twilight to herald the coming, and retard the departure of the closing day; no cheerful awakening of glad nature to dewy morning's smiles; no deep blue sky to envelope earth in the radiance of heaven; no verdure in the meadows to refresh the sight; no green drapery on the trees to brighten the face of creation; no colouring in the flower to fill the mind with wonder at its variety, and the heart with rapture at its beauty. These, and similar sources of enjoyment, are not, it is true, essentially necessary to man's positive well-being, yet how much of the intellectual pleasure of life depends on their existence! Without them, of how many exquisite, refining, spiritualizing emotions should we be bereft, and how sweetly do they therefore manifest the love of Him, who, in creating the world, provided not only for our absolute wants, but even for our rational joys! Considerably, however, as on investigation, we find the existence of light to contribute to our comforts,

science teaches that this end is but secondary, compared with the far more important functions it discharges for the well-being of creation. Each ray of light that flies from the sun, can not only be decomposed into seven colours, to paint the sky and flower, and clothe the rainbow in its glory; but is still farther separable into three different forces, each invisibly exercising a distinct and most powerful influence on the vegetable world; each charged with its own peculiar office, and responsible for its own peculiar operations; each found alternately to preponderate, not only at different seasons of the year, but even at different hours of the day, as if gifted with instinct to comprehend the varying exigencies of the vegetable tribes; each performing its own individual task, yet always so as to combine with the others; thus by the joint agency of all, to perfect the work dependent on their co-operation. To one of these wonderful forces it is assigned, for instance, to penetrate the soil, and, in unison with other influences, develope life in the little seed buried beneath its surface, while to the other two it is given to impart to the young plant at a later period, its full perfection of form and brilliancy of hue. The solidity of the trunk of the tree and stem of the shrub; the bright and varied green of the plant; the decomposition of carbonic acid gas, and consequent exhalation of

oxygen by the vegetable world—all are due to the separate presence of one of the three, while to the no less marvellous agency of another we are indebted for the golden maturity of the waving harvest, the genial warmth of earth and air, and the phenomenon of the wind in all its phases, from the refreshing breeze to the raging storm.

In considering the effects of the sun's rays on the earth, we cannot but admire and wonder at the precision with which the distance of that luminary has been calculated, so as to insure to each portion of our planet exactly that degree of his influence which its welfare needs, and no more. Nearer, his fierce rays would bring destruction; further off, their power would be insufficient. The frail beauties of our gardens would perish if exposed to a higher temperature, while the glories of the tropics would fade, and their luxuriance give place to the sterility of northern regions, were solar influence diminished by increased distance. The hand that held the balance was the loving hand of a merciful Father; the eye that scanned the distance was the eye of Omniscience; therefore it is that the balance has been so nicely poised, the distance so accurately measured, the wants of the lowly floweret of the wilderness provided for as wisely, as effectually,

and as tenderly as those of the gorgeous productions of tropical lands.

With these facts before our eyes, how thrilling the interest with which each passing beam of light becomes invested! That trembling ray which flits across your vision, is the same magic, mysteriously gifted, almost living ray which weaves for the firmament its robe of azure, and tints the fairy garments of the many coloured flowers with hues brilliant as its native skies; which gives to the trunk of the majestic lord of the forest, solidity and durability; which first beautifies our earthly dwelling place, and then, with a two-fold power of conferring enjoyment, reveals the beauty it has created; which, by its varied influences on vegetation, provides for man his sustenance; which draws from every leaf, and plant, and blade of grass, that full supply of pure air, essential no less to animal than vegetable life; which sends the majestic vessel bounding onwards through the waters, to open communication between lands severed by thousands of miles of ocean, to facilitate the operations of commerce, to bear to far off lands the comforts of civilization, and carry to benighted tribes the blessings of religion. These are truths not to be learned without deep interest, but we must not content ourselves with simple enjoyment of the mental

banquet, nor ever again hail the dawning of the holy light, without sending a thought of love and an aspiration of gratitude to Him who endowed it with powers so vast, and influences so beneficent. Nature is a wonderful volume, whence they who read may learn much of the greatness and goodness of the Creator. Let this ever be your first, chief aim in the perusal of its records; and when your eyes have opened to the marvels amidst which you have, perhaps, hitherto lived unconscious and unheeding, your heart will turn with fresh love to their omnipotent Author. You will be startled at each new glimpse of the varied influences ever in energetic operation around you, but with the new light will come new reverence for the great prime mover of the vast machine. Let no one, then, say that science is useless. It has taught you that mysteries, deep and numerous, surround the little field flower, with its tiny leaves, and modest tints, and brief existence; and a solemn feeling, akin to holy veneration for sacred things, steals over you, as, with eyes of faith, you contemplate the many unseen agencies necessary to make that small work perfect; while glowing love warms your heart, and adoring homage bows your soul, as, guided by the same faith, you carry your gaze upwards from the instruments to the all-potent hand which directs them so unerringly. No; human science is not

useless, but if pursued in the right spirit, may, it is quite clear, be rendered available to the soul's improvement in a far more important science—that of the saints.

If we turn from the study of science to the perusal of the world's political history, still may we see God revealed at every step; still may we find our minds rising to a better knowledge of His attributes, and our hearts kindling with an increasing love of them. While His glory is inscribed, in gigantic letters of gold, on every sun that glitters in the sky, and equally manifested in each of the other wonders which science offers to our contemplation, no less can the hand of His providence be traced in the mighty changes which the records of history show us to have swept over the face of society since its first organization. The revolutions of nations; the successions of dynasties; the fall of long established sovereignties; the rise of new empires on the ruins of the old; the ceaseless vicissitudes which form the most prominent characteristics of the world's history,—how prolific are all in instruction! how rich in food for useful reflection!

To read of the days that are gone, and of the restless thoughts and busy projects which then stirred the minds and agitated the hearts of those who have long since passed away; to follow the historian as he narrates the wondrous achieve-

ments of some renowned hero of old, alternately depicting his courage as a warrior, his skill as a tactician, his wisdom as a commander; dwelling now on his insatiable thirst for dominion, and filling up the picture at last with his mighty conquests and almost world-extended fame;—this surely is to learn a profitable lesson on the nothingness of sublunary things, and the futility of all speculations limited to the present time. Where is now the conqueror whose very name struck terror into the hearts of nations? Long since mingled with the dust! Where is the eye that flashed fury on the foe, and burned with the unholy fire of passion in the hour of mortal conflict? Dim, extinct, closed for ever! Where is the voice that rose clear and high above the sound of trumpet and the clash of arms, and all the din of battle, to cheer a host on its way to victory? Silent—hushed—to be heard on earth no more! What now remains to the hero of his triumphs? A grave! There is the term of his ambitious aspirings; there the boundary of his dominions; there a resting-place at last for his restless heart. And if the glory of nations has passed away like that of individuals; if empires themselves have crumbled to dust like the hands which swayed their destinies; if not only a throne has been overturned, but a great people borne away in its ruins; if ancient history

presents a succession of vast monarchies only to exhibit in the same view the cradle of one resting on the tomb of the other; if modern history unfolds a new page only to develop new vicissitudes in the political condition of society; if we find that the records of former days are now only among the things that were, while those of the present have usurped their importance, to be themselves supplanted by the interests of the future, do we not learn from all that the glory of the world is too evanescent to possess intrinsic value?—Again; does not the narration of the horrors perpetrated for the gratification of personal ambition or the attainment of personal aggrandisement, teach us to shudder at the fearful consequences of unrestrained passion; and should not the tale of all the privations cheerfully endured, all the positive hardships voluntarily embraced, all the self-denial freely encountered only for the realization of an earthly object, raise a blush at our pusillanimity in the prosecution of our great and only real affair—the salvation and sanctification of our souls?

The perusal of history teaches us also the insufficiency of human things to satisfy the heart. Sesostris extended his empire from the Danube to the Ganges; inscriptions on pillars of stone proclaimed him "king of kings, and lord of

lords;" conquered sovereigns supplied in his regard the place of beasts of burden, and drew his triumphal chariot through the most public streets of his capital, and yet, in the end, he put a term to his own existence, which the loss of sight had rendered insupportable. Alexander wept because having pushed his conquests to the farthest attainable limits, the possibility of gaining new victories and acquiring additional fame seemed hopelessly cut off. "And Solomon, who exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom, whose face all the earth desired to see, whose wisdom all desired to hear, who made silver to be as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars to be as common as sycamores which grow in the plains" (3 Kings, x.); "who heaped together for himself the wealth of kings and provinces, and surpassed in magnificence all that were before him," (Ecc. ii. 8, 9): he whose will was law, and whose desires must have been satisfied almost before they could be formed; even he exclaimed in bitterness and emptiness of heart, "I was weary of my life when I saw that all things under the sun are evil, and all vanity and vexation of spirit," (Ibid. 17). "Vanity of vanities, and all things are vanity!" (Ibid. xii. 8) So true is it, that the whole universe, with its countless worlds, could not replenish one small heart!

Again, in studying the varied history of the human race, we are struck, and that most forcibly, by the almost visible manifestation of the hand of Providence, in its phases and fluctuations. Revolutions of empires are rendered subservient to God's high designs, either for the diffusion of religion and morality or the punishment of crime. Sometimes the destruction of a nation is the means employed to check the progress of idolatry; sometimes, again, the desolation of a whole land is made to involve the chastisement of pride and impiety. Human agents unconsciously accomplish the high will of heaven, and scourge the sinner, all ignorant of the destiny they are fulfilling. This truth, so clearly and constantly exemplified in the history of the people of God, is also frequently and strikingly illustrated in profane history. For instance, we read that Nebuchodonosor profited of the internal troubles which distracted Egypt, to invade that country, and carry his victorious arms from one extremity of it to the other. To human view, which sees no farther than the surface, the connecting link between cause and event seems quite apparent, and the combination of circumstances perfectly natural. Yet we shall find on enquiry that the cause lay deeper than mortal eye could discern, and that the event which seemed merely its natural result, had been,

in truth, pre-ordained by high heaven for a specific end. God had denounced heavy judgments against the pride of the Egyptian monarch, and partly with a view to carry out the sentence, partly to indemnify the Assyrian king for his hitherto unrequited toils in the taking of Tyre, he abandoned Egypt to the latter. "It is wonderful," says the historian Rollin, "to hear the Creator himself unveiling his designs on the subject, and few passages in Scripture give a clearer idea of the supreme dominion which God exercises over the kings and princes of the earth. 'Son of man,' said the Almighty to the prophet, 'Nabuchodonosor, king of Babylon, hath made his army to undergo hard service against Tyre, . . . and there hath no reward been given him, nor his army, for the service that he rendered me against it.' 'Therefore,' thus saith the Lord God, 'behold I will set Nabuchodonosor in the land of Egypt, and he shall take her multitude, and rifle the spoils thereof, and it shall be wages for his army: and for the service that he hath done me against it, I have given him the land of Egypt, because he hath laboured for me, saith the Lord God,' (Ezek. xxix. 18, 19, 20.) 'And he shall kindle a fire in the temple of the gods of Egypt, and he shall burn them, and he shall carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt as a shepherd putteth on his

garment, and he shall go forth from thence in peace,' (Jer. xliii. 12.)"

"Thus it is that all who govern find themselves subject to a greater power. They do more or less than they intend, and their exploits never fail to lead to unforeseen results. They cannot anticipate the course of events, still less can they regulate or control it. He alone holds all in his hand, to whom the future is as the present; who overrules all decisions, and possesses dominion over all time. Thereby is verified the saying of the apostle, that God is 'the blessed and only mighty, the King of kings and Lord of lords,' (1 Tim. vi. 15); whose peace is unalterable; who sees everything change without changing himself; whose immutable will causes all human revolutions; who gives and takes away power; who transfers authority from one individual, one dynasty, and one nation, to another, to show that they hold it but as a temporary loan, while in Him alone it resides by absolute right of possession."—(Bossuet's Discourse on Universal History.)

To pursue the subject farther would be both tedious and unnecessary. Enough has been said to show, that to the eye intent on tracing it out, the connection between the sacred and profane in study is clearly discernible; and that with attention to keep it always steadily in view,

the acquisition of human learning may, as more than once observed, become subservient to the soul's advancement in piety, and the heart lay up new and ever increasing stores of virtue, while the mind enlarges its sphere of information. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," (Ps. xxiii. 1); the world, material and moral, is full of his majesty. "The heavens show forth his glory, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands," (Ibid. xviii. 1); "His voice is on the waters," (Ibid. xxviii. 3) and on the earth, and in the air. It comes to us in the soft murmur of the silver brook, and the loud roar of ocean's billows; it speaks from the flitting cloud on high, and the sea's deep caves beneath; it whispers in the fragrance of the scented flower, and the sighing of the breeze through the forest leaves; in the warble of the bird and the hum of the insect; in the flash of the lightning and the crash of the thunder; in the revolutions of nations and the overthrow of empires; from all sides it comes; from all places, from all things. The multiplied voices of creation are but the echo of the mighty voice of God. Let us then never hear the one without listening with the ear of the heart for the other, and assuredly we shall not be disappointed; assuredly our studies will but unite us more closely to the source of all knowledge, and

plunge us more deeply into the fountain of all light.

While you are taught that you cannot devote your leisure hours to a more profitable end than the continuance of the studies only begun at school, you must, however, carefully remember that even profitable study may be attended with very serious evils; and you must, therefore, be most cautious to avoid all errors in applying to yours. You will err in your motive if you study from a love of display; and you will err by excess if you follow your scientific pursuits with extreme ardour, or to the neglect of any domestic duty.

There is something so elevating in knowledge, something so soul-expanding in the dawning of a new thought, something so calculated to raise the mind to the Almighty Creator in the discovery of a new marvel in his works, that it seems strange how any one who really loves knowledge, can care to pursue it merely as a means of pedantic display. That it is thus used we know, but we have only to grieve over this sad perversion of its high and holy destiny, and to ensure that the mistakes of others do not become our own by imitation. Never make an exhibition of your learning such as it may be. Love study, as the dear companion of your solitary hours, and the useful ally which has saved you many a

time from yielding to indolence, or seeking a pastime in puerilities; enjoy it as enabling you to understand, and, therefore, take an interest in other subjects of conversation besides the *on dits*, or, perhaps, the detraction of the day; but keep your enjoyment and your stores to yourself, when you are not required by circumstances to communicate either. Conceited display, besides that it is always repulsive, never fails to defeat its end, for it is a well established maxim that the most prone to exhibit are, in general, those who have least to show, the really well informed being invariably the most humble, diffident, and retiring.

You will be secure against pursuing study to the detriment of duty, if you look on it merely as a profitable means of filling up those spare hours which no definite obligation claims from you, and never extend it beyond them. Thus limited, it will prove a very innocent enjoyment and a very effectual preservative against idleness.

That you may read and study profitably, you must not do so hastily and superficially, but always tranquilly, deliberately, and methodically. Before you conclude, cast a rapid mental glance over the leading points of your subject, making sure that you have not only seized your author's meaning, but transferred to memory the facts you have been perusing, with their connecting

links. In reading, observe both the beauties of good, and the defects of imperfect, composition, and thus you will acquire a useful lesson for the improvement of your style both of writing and conversing.

Never allow yourself to have many books or many studies in hand together; finish one book thoroughly, and be able to render yourself a tolerable account of its contents before you begin another. Beside that the contrary practice fosters a dangerous frivolity of mind and inconstancy of purpose, it defeats the object of your reading; for surely you cannot be expected to retain a quantity of information, not only superficially gleaned, but absolutely dissimilar in character. Each new subject, among a great variety, will naturally erase the impression produced by the preceding, or, if any traces of such desultory studies remain, they will probably combine into a heterogeneous mass, from which you will find it impossible to separate precise information for practical use. "Read a great deal, but only a few books," was the maxim of the philosophers of old, and, if you adopt it for yours, experience will prove that it has lost nothing of its wisdom in the lapse of time.

"Happy is the man who pursues knowledge with a pure heart and simple intention, discovering at every step, new causes for divine

love and for increased humility; applying all the information he acquires to the good of his fellow creatures, and to the perfection of his own virtues! O Science! how frivolous are the efforts of thy votaries when they mistake thy uses, and miscalculate thy power! O Virtue! how ignorant is science when compared to thee!" (Gerald Griffin.)

CHAPTER X.

FIRST FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.—THE PERFECT DISCHARGE OF HOME DUTY.

HOME is to you as it should be to every woman—your world, your empire, your sun, your centre of attraction; a worthy sphere for your energies; a legitimate field for the exercise of your accomplishments, acquirements, and varied mental resources. It seems but a little while to look back to the day when you left that home, a happy, thoughtless, petted child; how different are your feelings on your return to it, supposing you to have made a good use of the years which have elapsed since then, and learned to know the nature and responsibility of your home duties! All the sweet recollections of your childhood are grouped around it; its image casts no cloud on your memory, no shadow on your heart; it is all bathed in sunlight and steeped in brightness; it is what it ever was to you—*home.* But happy as you have always known it, you feel that your high mission now is to render it happier still. Good and virtuous as you remember it to have ever been, you know that after receiving the blessing of a religious education, your peculiar obligation and high prero-

gative will be still farther to extend the dominion of piety; still more firmly to consolidate the reign of virtue, not by avowedly and perhaps arrogantly assuming the office of teacher, but by silently displaying in your own conduct the beauty and the attractions of true practical religion. This is your high mission; this your first duty; this your responsible position. In pursuance of so great an end, your maxim and your practice must be to become all to all, and for the realisation of this noble object to forget yourself.

The first claimants on your heart-service are, of course, your parents, if you are so happy as still to possess them. To enumerate all the motives which religion supplies for the faithful discharge of your duty in their regard, would indeed be but wearisome repetition to you who have been so fully instructed on the point. If you should ever be inclined to forget those motives, appeal to your own heart, and unless it be a very hardened and a very perverted one, it will at once admit their existence and yield to their force. But surely there can be no apprehension of this. You never can forget your parents' love for you, though it is perfectly true that you never can know its extent, never fathom its depth, never measure its height, never see its termination, never comprehend all the self-sacri-

fice, all the solicitude, all the devotion, all the benefits by which its solidity has been proved, dating from the hour when it first gathered bright and warm as summer sunshine around your cradle, to screen you from all peril, and if its mighty power could achieve it, even from all pain. How many days of anxiety and nights of watchfulness did you not cost them, while, in the helpless dependence of infancy, your little feeble frame lay restless and fever-tossed on the bed of sickness, each moan of suffering a dagger to their tender hearts, each tear a sorrow more intense than if it were personal! Oh! what a weight of parental love had accumulated on your baby head before you were even conscious of its existence! Many years have perhaps passed away since those early manifestations of its depth and earnestness, yet has that first love ever cooled? that first vigilance relaxed? that first solicitude diminished? Has not your amount of obligation, on the contrary, increased and multiplied as time flowed on? Sum up, if you can, all the forbearance of those patient, loving parents; their readiness to excuse your faults and follies—their promptitude to forgive. Pass in review all their earnest desires for your happiness, their constant efforts to procure you the innocent enjoyments suited to your age, their solicitude for your early initiation in principles

of true piety, their anxiety for your welfare in after life, their zealous efforts to ensure you a liberal and enlightened education. Surely, next to God, you owe them everything; from the first lesson of virtue instilled by their own lips into your infant mind, to the last advice breathed into your ear by those to whom they transferred the important task of your later training. Yes; under God, you owe them all; food and raiment, education and accomplishments; happiness, nay, in one sense, religion itself—your first best treasure. And now your most eager desire is, doubtless, to indemnify them as far as your poor means allow, for all they have done and endured for you; and to shed around their declining years that same holy sunlight of love which, but for them, had not perhaps rested in brightness on your cradle, and danced in gladness along your childhood's path. Love, although a tribute of the heart, will not, if genuine, confine itself to the heart, but will prove its strength and solidity by exterior manifestations. The truth of yours for your parents will be evinced by respect, docility, confidence, and affectionate, active services.

As you know, perfection is not to be found among mortals; to expect it would be vain. Your parents, dear and good as they are to you, and estimable for their own worth, are still, like

all the rest of the children of Adam, liable to human frailties, from which may sometimes spring trials of your feelings, and contradictions of your inclinations. Should this be the case, should it happen that you have anything to bear from them, will you permit yourself to forget all they have borne from you:—the irritability of sickness, the pettishness of infancy, the waywardness of childhood, perhaps the insubordination of girlhood? Those arms clasped you in love, oh! how many times! that bosom pillowed your head, while you slept your tranquil infant slumber, and dreamt your happy childish dream. Those lips were ever invoking blessings on your path, and uttering words of endearment which never can be forgotten all through life, but come again and again on the heart's listening ear, like the distant echo of some sweet, low song, heard long ago as you stood at your mother's knee, mute and still from very excess of enjoyment. Will you forget all this, and suffer resentment against the authors of your being to live one moment in your heart, whatever be the provocation, real or imaginary? If they seem exacting, think how much more so you have yourself been in their regard. If they now and again betray an infirmity of temper, think how often they have patiently borne with, and made allowances for the less excusable ebullitions of yours.

If they appear hard to please, remember all their tender anxiety to procure pleasure for you. Endure lovingly any trial to which they may subject you, and never suffer a hasty word *to* them, or a disrespectful comment *of* them, to escape your lips. Defer to their opinions, accommodate yourself even to their peculiarities, and however apparent to others these may be, let them be to you as things unseen. Address them always in the tone and language of profound respect, and never with that pert flippancy so inconsistent under all circumstances with the prescriptions of ordinary civility, but so absolutely intolerable towards parents. Read to them in the evenings, if they like it, or converse, or call on your musical acquirements, as they may prefer; but whatever be the mode of showing it, let respect for their presence, and deference to their wishes, be at all times and under all circumstances your ruling principle.

2. Confide in them fully and frankly; consult them on all matters, little and great; conceal nothing from them, not even your imprudences and follies, should you have been betrayed into either; form no friendships, make no acquaintances, embark in no epistolary correspondences, read no books, without their distinct knowledge and unreserved approval, and you will thus be secured against very many dangers of which you

now little dream. It is the error, and often the misfortune of the young to be caught by first appearances. Deceived by empty professions, which in the yet unimpaired freshness of their own guileless hearts, they believe sincere; dazzled by the showy external which hides a depth of frivolity and heartlessness; fascinated by the elegance of deportment, which is but the mantle of an evil temper and a selfish spirit; fancying that under this combination of exterior graces and attractions they have found the friend whom their imaginations represented as necessary to their happiness, they rush into the snare, and too often discover their mistake at a sad cost. The truth which your dazzled eyes cannot discern will be easily perceptible to the calm observation of your parents. If, looking on them as your first and best friends, you refer your doubts to the decision of their wise tribunal, their superior wisdom and experience will very surely supply for your want of both. With safer guides to direct them than an enthusiastic imagination and impulsive feelings, they will enquire, not whether the object of your admiration is externally prepossessing — finished in manner, and perfect in address—not whether her lips seem formed only for honied words and complimentary phrases; but whether she is a Christian, in the true sense of the appellation; whether

she lives for God or for the world; whether her fascinations are reserved for company, or called into habitual requisition at home; whether she is sensible or silly; reserved and retiring, or frivolous and fond of display. *They* will do what *you* cannot: separate the gold from the dross, the wheat from the chaff, and perhaps, in conclusion, remove a veil from your eyes, and show you the precipice, from which only your confidence in their prudence and their love has saved you. So of books, so of correspondence, so of pastimes: the rule applies to all.

3. Obey their least directions most punctually, even though you may not be able to discern the necessity or utility of doing so. We are bad judges in our own cause; self-love is a powerful advocate, which sometimes speaks so loudly as quite to drown the voice of reason. It is fortunate for us that we are not left at the mercy of its false eloquence, but obliged by God's ordinance to yield to judges more dispassionate, and guides more steady and secure. Your parents will be to you those safe guides, provided you implicitly submit to all their arrangements, cheerfully sacrificing the pleasures, and avoiding the associations they condemn, and with equal readiness substituting those they recommend; not reserving your obedience for those more important occasions, which are of rare

occurrence, but making it the practice of every day, and every hour of every day;—obeying, not with murmurs on your lips, and sullenness on your brow, but with that sweetness of manner which adds so greatly to the charm of your compliance in the eyes of your parents, and so immeasurably to its merit in the sight of God—the great ultimate object of all the obedience, which for His love you render to his earthly representatives.

4. The amount of active service to be rendered at home will, of course, depend entirely on your parents' wishes. Your mother may not please to transfer to you more than a partial superintendence of household matters, or it may be that she will feel relieved by resigning the burden altogether. In either case undertake lovingly the duties assigned; look on them as inferior in importance only to your immediate duties to God; devote to them your best energies; never regret it, if they encroach on the time you had set aside for your studies or other personal pursuits, but renounce unhesitatingly all other pursuits for these. If you are systematic and orderly in the discharge of domestic duties, you will soon be able to secure ample time also for the cultivation of your mind.—Whether or not you are permitted to take a part in household concerns, you will find, if you

seek them, innumerable opportunities of rendering service to your parents, not very important ones, it is true, yet such as will equally manifest your affection, and gratify its objects. There are a thousand little nameless attentions which love suggests, and the loving child delights to pay, were it only for the sake of the approving smile which is certain to reward them. Surely, a parent's approving smile is to the true-hearted child a rich recompense for every service, even if it could be a troublesome or a fatiguing one. In sickness, especially, you need not be told that your place is by your parents' pillow; you may be sure that no hand can smoothen it for them as yours; that no music ever sounded to them so sweet as the soft tones of your gentle voice, and the all but noiseless tread of your subdued footsteps; that no rich exotic ever breathed such fragrance, or displayed such beauty to their thinking, as does the simple garden flower, destined by your thoughtful affection to diffuse a ray of nature's brightness over that solemn chamber; that no cordial could be so reviving, no luxury so acceptable, as the refreshing draught prepared and administered by your hand. And if it should be your destiny to survive these precious parents—if that bed of sickness should become the bed of death, then, oh! then, in that momentous crisis, show that

your love for them is stronger than even death. Surmount the agonies, and still the wailings of nature, that you may be enabled to discharge, as a Christian should, the last all-important duties of your high trust. See that spiritual aid be provided in abundance, and the last consoling, strengthening rites of religion administered in good time. Encourage them to holy resignation and saintly disengagement; animate their hope by the consideration of the infinite merits of Jesus; support their confidence by the view of the crucifix, or if your fortitude is not equal to the task, commit it to safe hands, and ensure for yourself this one consolation at least, that after having been their comfort through life, you were to them as their visible guardian spirit in death, meriting that their expiring blessing should fall rich and warm on your head, there to rest until the day when the everlasting crown of the dutiful child shall be added to it in heaven.

Next on the list of your home duties, are those you owe your brothers and sisters: comprising forbearance, gentleness, and affectionate services—all essential to the fulfilment of your high mission as an angel of peace at home, and each presupposing in its exercise fixed habits of unselfishness. Forbearance requires, that in differences of opinion on immaterial matters, you

give up your own without contending; that you endure little personal slights without manifesting resentment; that you bear a rude, or sharp, or sarcastic remark without seeming to hear it; in other words, that you renounce your sensibilities and forget yourself. Gentleness demands that you add to the beauty of forbearance the still farther charm of amiability of manner; and as this can be accomplished only through control over feeling, the necessity of self-denial becomes again apparent. The habit of forgetting self, or remembering its claims only to sacrifice them, will gradually lead to that control, and you will come at last, through God's grace, not merely to repress the rising word and check the half-impulsive movement of irritation and anger, but so perfectly to possess you soul in patience, that the gentle smile on your lips may be but a reflection of the calm of the unruffled spirit within. Finally, to render your brothers and sisters the affectionate services they may require, you will again have great need to be unselfish. Your own convenience must be overlooked to consult theirs; your own projects renounced, to co-operate in carrying out their opposing plans; your own pursuits given up, that their wishes may be fulfilled; and that, not once nor twice, but habitually. What self-renunciation is demanded here!

If your brothers and sisters are grown, it will

be your duty to contribute to the enjoyment and sociability of their home evenings, and for this end to place at their disposal the accomplishments which you have acquired to little purpose, if you imagine you can devote them to a better end than the innocent gratification of those around you. Elder brothers would be often induced to spend their evenings blamelessly at home, if that home were rendered attractive, and those evenings cheerful and agreeable; and oh! to what higher or holier object can the varied resources of a well educated and highly accomplished woman be directed, than that of shielding from evil those she is bound to love! Vain and useless, indeed, will all your accomplishments prove, if you forget that home is the legitimate theatre for their display.—It will also be turning your literary acquirements and your accomplishments to a very profitable end, to assist your younger brothers and sisters in their studies; to explain or teach them their lessons, divesting them of the technicalities in which lie so much of children's difficulties; and to create an interest in what they are learning, not only by bringing it within the scope of their comprehension, but by doing so, as far as possible, in an agreeable and entertaining manner. You may not feel inclined for the trouble of this. Teaching is often very laborious, and very trying; but when

you are tempted to feel it so, recal your maxim, and proceed on your self-denying road. Be patient and even-tempered, or you will not readily acquire control over your little pupils; make them love their teacher, and they will soon come to take pleasure in their studies.

Again, your skill as a needle-woman should be quite at the service of your brothers and younger sisters; and, if your family be large, may be found no inconsiderable acquisition. Of what use is that dexterity on which you, perhaps, piqued yourself at school, if it is to be displayed only in the production of a few showy pieces of ornamental work, and not placed at the service of all at home, for more ordinary, and more practically useful purposes? When no weightier duty claims your time, you are no doubt fully justified in gratifying your taste for fancy work; but in order to be unselfish in your tastes as well as in your feelings, you must first see that the wardrobes of your brothers and younger sisters are in order, and that no articles of theirs require repair. Order is a household virtue of the highest rank, and there is none you should more earnestly cultivate. Accustom yourself to put everything into its own place at once, and you will not only have an orderly house, but will be spared the continually recurring fatigue, with its attendant loss of time, of having constantly, either to put matters to

rights, or to seek articles mislaid or lost, merely from the neglect of this simple and easy practice. See that your own room is always neat, and your wardrobe in order, and then extend your watchful eye equally to those of the rest of the family. This will be rendering them active and very useful service, and that in a more important manner than is, at first sight, apparent. Your little thoughtful attentions will assuredly win the love which is the special reward of the amiable and unselfish. That love will gradually widen the sphere and strengthen the foundation of your influence, and if you know how to use that influence worthily, what an immense amount of good it may produce! what an incalculable amount of evil it may avert! You owe your brothers and sisters, whether elder or younger, the great duty of good example. How perfectly will that duty be fulfilled in all its parts, if your life is a perpetual exhibition of the self-sacrificing spirit which cannot animate your conduct, unless solid, practical piety has firmly established its throne in your heart!

Besides your obligations to your parents, and brothers, and sisters, the wide circle of your home duties likewise embraces those to the servants attached to your establishment. These are also threefold:—consideration, mildness, and instruction.

Although the Almighty, in appointing the varied conditions of his great family, was pleased to permit gradations of rank and position, we should not forget that we nevertheless *do* all belong to the same great family; that those who serve us are of the same nature as ourselves, equally precious in the sight of the Creator of all, and perhaps far more so, because of superior moral worth and virtue. Although he permits us to avail of their services, it was never His intention that we should use them harshly, address them imperiously, or overtax their strength. Remembering that they have feelings just like your own, treat them considerately; ask them civilly for what you require; show yourself obliged for their attention; do not overburden them with work, but always calculate carefully whether your orders and their capabilities as to time and strength correspond. Do not call on them unnecessarily to render you trifling assistance in matters you are very well able to manage for yourself, but always try rather to save, than to give them trouble. If you have occasion to reprove them, do so with moderation; speak mildly, and never disedify them by loss of temper. If you irritate them by severe reproaches, or a haughty tone and manner, you expose them to overstep the barriers of the respect they owe to you; and their

respect once lost, you will find it hard to regain it, or to resume the control so necessary in your relative positions. If you allow yourself to be over-exacting with the servants in your parent's house, are you not likely to prove a petty tyrant over those destined for your immediate service in the home you will hereafter call your own? Attach your servants to you by consideration in health, and kindness in sickness, and you will find, when occasion offers, that they have hearts, and kind and grateful ones too. Ensure their respect by invariably showing that you respect yourself, and you will find your directions obeyed with punctuality and fidelity at least, if not with alacrity and cheerfulness. Over-familiarity tends, no less than over-harshness, to destroy the respect of servants. They will reverence you while you keep your own place—no longer. Avoid, then, all familiar intercourse with them, not from pride in your own station or contempt for theirs, but simply because in addition to the reasons already assigned, their companionship is not calculated to improve you, owing to the nature of their habitual associations, as well as to their want of education. Kindness and gentleness need never degenerate into familiarity; the two are perfectly distinct, and the one quite as much to be disapproved as the other is to be recommended.

One of the most stringent duties of the heads of families is, as you know, either personally to impart, or at least to procure, religious instruction for their servants. What more important, solid, useful service can you render your parents, than to relieve their consciences of this weighty burden, by undertaking, with their permission, the task of instructing their domestics in the Christian doctrine, and seeing that ample time and opportunity are afforded them for the discharge of their duty to God? This will, indeed, be a meritorious service in the sight of the Most High, and, if your parents comprehend their own solemn responsibilities, a most acceptable one in theirs. Do not refuse it to them, even though it must, perhaps, entail trouble and self-sacrifice, remembering the maxim on which we started:—that unselfishness must lie at the basis of the perfect fulfilment of home duties.

Oh! how much of home's happiness and harmony must depend on you! How much of its brightness must emanate from you! How widely must your influence extend, winding silently through all its parts, descending invisibly through all its gradations, encircling it round, without seeming to do so; your even temper its undimmed sunbeam; your cheerful voice its ever-flowing song; your gentle sympathy in weal and woe its common refuge; your very presence its bond

of union. Love your home; be ever true to the sacred instinct which draws you to it as to your centre of attraction, and prefer its quiet, innocent, holy, hidden joys, to the noisy, dissipating, empty, unsatisfying amusements of the showy, heartless world. You are not destined to spend your whole existence in that home; the day must come when you will quit it for another, but, wherever that other is to be, whether in the cloister or in the world, you will not fail to acquit yourself worthily of your new obligations, and ensure the happiness of those with whom you are destined to pass the remainder of life, if you have faithfully cultivated the self-immolating spirit which must be the foundation of "home virtues."

CHAPTER XI.

SECOND FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.—THE REGULATION OF TEMPER.

WHY is not every home a happy home? Why do we hear so often of unhappy homes, unhappy wives, unhappy husbands, unhappy children, unhappy servants? Why are we told that if a city's multitudinous roofs could be raised in a moment by the touch of some magician's wand, and a bird's-eye view given of the interior, we should be shocked and surprised at the strange disproportion between the happy and the unhappy? The preponderance of evil temper over good, supplies the ready answer to the query. Evil temper is the firebrand which lights up the flame of domestic discord; evil temper the engine which enkindles the fury of passion; evil temper the power which sets in motion "that world of iniquity," the tongue; evil temper the cloud which overcasts the soul's peace; evil temper the tempest that scatters far and wide, and sweeps away at last the elements of union and concord; evil temper the canker-worm which eats away, even to the very heart, the fair fruit of harmony and contentment; evil temper the easy solution

of many an otherwise inexplicable enigma in the moral world.

Men's tempers are said to be as varied as their expression of features, and to the rule which broadly states that none among them are exempt from some original infirmity, the exceptions are so few, if any, that it may fairly take its place among admitted principles and unquestioned axioms. But although, in punishment of our first parents' sin, we brought with us into the world many perverted inclinations and depraved dispositions, it was not intended by our Maker that our moral infirmities should strengthen and grow with our physical development; he destines them, on the contrary, to become an occasion of merit, through our patient, persevering, never-ceasing efforts to apply to them the necessary remedies, and gradually work out their cure. It is no excuse, if our tempers are bad, that they are so as a birthright; for we have all been taught, until the lesson is as familiar as our breathing, that piety, to be genuine, must be practical, and that to be practical, its influence must tell upon our conduct; not alone our external conduct, but more still upon our deep-seated feelings—our humours, our tempers in all their ramifications. If you have not yet practically learned that piety to be true, must be amiable, and that to be amiable it must be self-

denying, you have only to grieve over the perversion of its lessons, and to fear that unless you turn them to better account, you are little likely to contribute to the happiness of the home to which you are returning. What is it that will place that home—either the one which is now to receive you, or that for which, according to the designs of Providence, you will one day permanently exchange it—on the ranks not of the happy, but the unhappy homes we have been considering? Temper, evil temper. If you bring this with you, wherever you go, *there* will be, *there* must be, unhappiness, misery. How do matters stand with you on this all-important point? Have you seriously considered the necessity of subduing your temper? Have you undertaken the task? Have you succeeded, fully or even in part? What is your peculiar defect of temper? Have you studied it? Have you made close acquaintance with it? Is the enemy so well known to you, that he cannot hope to escape detection under any disguise? so thoroughly in your power, that he dare not engage in conflict with any chance of success? It is indeed most earnestly to be hoped that such is the case; yet, as without vigilance and frequent self-examination, we are apt to lose sight of the insidious encroachments of passion, and in our self-love gradually to blind ourselves to our defects, it may be use-

ful to place before you some of the deepest shades and most marked lineaments of evil temper, that as a faithful mirror, the picture may reflect to your soul's eyes the first faint appearance of a gathering cloud on your own humour, and that so forewarned, you may take measures to disperse it, before it has time to break into a storm.

Who will say what defect of temper is the worst, which works the widest ruin, which causes the most unhappiness? It is hard to say which is worst where all are evil; yet, perhaps, the sullen, brooding, stubborn temper may merit the first place on the list. Is this yours? If it be, you will awake some morning in your usual health and spirits; you will rise bright as a summer day, and light hearted as a merry bird, and so you will meet your family. But lo! something is said or done that mortifies you, perhaps some little fault is imputed to you, justly or unjustly as the case may be, or a favourite project overturned, or a strongly expressed opinion contradicted, or a seemingly reasonable request refused; it is only a trifle at any rate, but, like the black vapour creeping over the calm moon's brow, the cloud of resentment gathers over yours, and, in a moment, hides from sight, or turns to gloom, what was but now so fair a sight to look on,—the heart's smile reflected on the heart's index. But the smile is gone, and it has carried

in its train the companion smiles which hung on it. Your parents are grieved, disappointed, perhaps displeased; your brothers and sisters half sorry, half vexed, half wondering; yourself humbled and ashamed, but more angry still;—and now what is to be the result? Conscience says you are wrong, but you will not admit this yet; there is more to be done first. Temper must be gratified, ere repentance comes. Instead of proceeding cheerfully and brightly to the day's occupations, you go about them with a heavy step and sullen air, which augurs but indifferently for the manner in which they will be performed. The sense of your fancied, or, let us suppose, your real wrongs, presses heavily and more heavily on your spirit; constant brooding over the provocation, lends to your imagination a marvellously magnifying power, and what was, in truth, but as a grain of sand, assumes the magnitude of a mountain. The hour of prayer comes round, but how can you pray, with your mind in an absolute ferment? The hour of family meeting arrives again, but this time it is a cheerless, nay a sad meeting. Your temper—say it to yourself, for it is true—your temper has brought a wrinkle to your father's brow, and drawn a sigh from your mother's heart; your temper has silenced the heart's music, of which the merry laughter of your little brothers and

sisters was but the echo, so lately as this morning; and, shall it be said—your temper has raised the question in the mind of more than one in that home circle, "is this the fruit of a religious education? this the result of pious training?" Will you not throw yourself at that father's knees? will you not sob on that mother's bosom? will you not try to blot from out of your existence, by your tears, the hours which through your fault have been to them hours, not only of privation of pleasure, but of positive endurance of pain? Not yet—not yet. The cloud will dissolve into penitential tears in time, but not until more misery has been endured—more displeasure excited; more disedification given. When you have brooded enough, resented enough, viewed your grievances under every aspect, and extracted from them all the bitterness which with ingenuity they can be made to yield, then at last you will suffer conscience to speak, or rather to be heard; for it has not ceased to speak, though you would not listen. You will acknowledge your fault, implore pardon of God and your parents, and promise amendment; yet cheerfully as the kiss of peace is accorded, you cannot conceal from yourself that the spell is broken; that you have for the present at least lost your position; that you have forfeited a portion of your claim to the respect of your younger brothers and sisters, and

with it a portion of your influence over them for good. In addition to sorrow for having offended God, you have to endure misery, humiliation, and remorse for having pained your parents, and indulged your selfish feelings at the expense of every duty; and as the final aggravation to your self-reproach, you are compelled to admit, that all this multiplied suffering would have been averted by a single effort of the self-control you have unfortunately neglected to acquire. Never hesitate to acknowledge your faults, or delay to make the only reparation in your power, by asking forgiveness for them. Never allow a vindictive or resentful feeling to gain entrance into your soul—for if once admitted, it will not be banished without extreme difficulty. It is easier far to deny it entrance at first, than to dislodge it afterwards. Never permit "the sun to go down on your wrath" (Eph. iv. 26), or retire to repose with an emotion of anger rankling in your heart; and be assured you will sleep more tranquilly after having made your peace with God, your neighbour, and yourself, than if you allowed resentment and wounded pride to overshadow your slumbers. Always remember, that by deferring to own yourself wrong, you but add to the pain and humiliation of doing so at last, and adopt it as your practice, ever to disarm displeasure by the sincerity of

your humility, and the promptitude of your repentance.

Young persons are apt to attach the idea of something poetic to the word sensitiveness, which seems to them to imply simply a very high refinement of delicate feeling, but this is quite a mistake. Sensibility to the woes of others; true, genuine feeling for the distressed; cordial sympathy with the suffering; these are the offspring of natural amiability and kindliness of heart, refined and perfected by divine charity; but sensitiveness is something absolutely different, because quite personal, quite selfish, its exciting cause some self-created trouble, some imaginary wrong; some exaggerated view of the minor, inevitable trials of life. The sensitive look for attention and consideration, and are hurt if these be ever so unintentionally withheld. They are ever ready to take offence—touchy as it is called—and, not satisfied to wait until a real, deliberate insult has been offered, they are ever fancying that insults were meant; ever ready to impute to a formal intention of wounding their feelings, every little accidental, and wholly unintended slight. In dealing with them the manner must be carefully adjusted; words must be weighed and looks measured; for, if a shadow of coolness or indifference or harshness be found discernible by the aid of imagination's magnifying glass, deep will

be the wound inflicted, mortal the pain, and long-lived the resentment. In reproving them especially, the greatest caution must be used, the most delicate management employed; certain chords only must be struck, and the others carefully avoided, or the consequences will be quite alarming.

May not all this be fairly termed unsubdued temper and exceeding selfishness, rather than exquisite delicacy of feeling? Is it not something rather to be ashamed of as betraying weakness of mind, than to glory in as an evidence of ultra refinement? Must not the wound of self-love be indeed profound and tender, when it shrinks not only from a touch but even from a look, a word, a peculiar intonation of voice? If you discern traces of this infirmity in your character it behoves you to be on your guard against it, else it will prove a sad obstacle to the happiness it is your aim to diffuse around you at home, and moreover, neutralize the efforts of your parents to guard you against the dangers arising both from your own inexperience, and from the evil external influences to which you may be exposed. If your mother points out a fault to be corrected, or recommends a course to be pursued, or expresses disapproval of an acquaintance or a correspondence, or a style of dress, or in any other way thwarts your in-

clinations, and that you thereupon show you consider yourself unkindly treated, talk of wounded feelings and end by a burst of tears, she will, probably, after one or two trials, discontinue the troublesome task of advising you, and leave you to your own guidance, which can but lead you astray. The strongest proof of friendship that can be given us, is to point out our defects. Those truly interested in our welfare will tell us our faults; those utterly indifferent about it, will reserve their censorious comments for our absence, after, perhaps, complimenting us in our presence. Never oblige your parents to have recourse to silence; always take in good part their advice, their exhortations, their admonitions, even their reproofs. Knowing how much they love you, you cannot doubt the sincerity of their motive in showing you your faults, and have, therefore, the less reason to concern yourself about their manner of doing so. Even if their admonitions are clothed in terms more severe than the occasion seems to require, still does the motive remain unchanged, and still should your gratitude and submission be unvarying. Create no fictitious troubles—the world has enough of real ones in store, against which it should be your aim to inure yourself, by making of your present lesser trials a sort of probationary introduction to the heavier ones to come. Take

common sense views of life, and be satisfied to be dealt with in the ordinary prosaic way. Make war against the sensitiveness of your nature; view it in its correct light, and substitute for your aptitude to take offence, that cheerful good humour, which, founded on charity and humility, takes everything in good part; puts an amiable construction on an unamiable act; has no eyes to see, and no ears to hear insults, and instead of being mortified at reproof, is itself the first to plead guilty to its necessity.

While the peculiar bias of some self-tormenting spirits leads them to fancy the existence of imaginary troubles, it is but too true that many create for themselves miseries most positive and real. They are unmistakeably unhappy, but unfortunately refuse to trace to its right source the origin of the evil, and thus render it incurable. Exacting, unreasonable, suspicious, captious, jealous, variable—they alienate the love of hearts once fondly devoted to them; and having wearied out patience, exhausted forbearance, and cast at last a hopeless gloom over the domestic hearth, they are unjust enough to impute to inconstancy in others, the unhappiness of which they are themselves the sole fabricators. Their trials are certainly not imaginary, yet, like those of the over-sensitive, they are self-created, and in both instances, evil temper is the artificer.

Once more, life has many real and bitter sorrows garnered up in its store-house, and in the day assigned by Providence, some of them may be dispensed to you for your greater good; but wait for God's time, and do not anticipate it; enjoy existence, while, through His kind permission, its sun shines brightly, and cast no cloud over it through your own perversity.

A discontented temper is perhaps one of the most difficult to manage, and the most trying to endure in domestic intercourse. To the discontented, nothing ever seems right; the services rendered them, are, by their own account, never rendered at the right time, or in the right way. If they are to be believed, the world at large and even the elements themselves, are in a conspiracy against them. Ever restless, and yet dissatisfied with every change; always finding fault, and yet never appeased by the removal of the evil complained of; always expecting attention, but not the better pleased for receiving it; peevish, fretful, whimsical, capricious, true to nothing while the fit of discontent holds sway, except the perpetual murmur, which from its constant repetition would really seem to contain some hidden balm, or possess some magic power—who can tell what a trial it must be to pass life in their society? who can estimate the merit of those who live under the influence of that moral

eclipse of good feeling and right reason, and patiently bear the martyrdom? This, you will say, is an exaggerated picture, but some more largely experienced in sorrow, will tell you the contrary.

Extremes of evil are not attained at once; every thing has a beginning, and against that beginning you must guard. Never allow yourself the habit of impatient complaining; it will not lessen the heat or the cold, or decrease the labour of your duties, or the difficulty of your studies, or refresh your weary mind or body, or drive away one pain from either; therefore, it is useless. But it is more than useless, for it deprives you of the merit you would derive from bearing those crosses silently for God's love; and worse than all, it too often degenerates into absolute impatience, thus involving the guilt and misery of sin. View the bright side of every event; always seek the silver lining of the cloud. Bear cheerfully the disappointments, and submit silently to the annoyances which must in any case be endured. Look forward to the indemnification which is perhaps to follow in the train of privation; and in case all other comforts fail, send your vision upwards to the everlasting crown which very surely awaits all who have suffered patiently and submissively here. Abhor the spirit of murmuring; discourage it in those

around you both by word and example, and be, by the invariable cheerfulness of your temper, the sunbeam of your home.

Moodiness, or humour, may, perhaps, be fairly said to entail more suffering on its victims themselves, than on those who have to endure its effects by reaction. It is the more painful to bear, and the more difficult to correct, as it arises suddenly, without notice, without apparent cause, and is more frequently the result of physical derangement, than of any real perversity of will. It fills the mind with gloomy images, and the heart with dismal, desponding feelings, of which the countenance and manner are but too frequently the reflection. It is often but another name for the unaccountable depression, or low spirits—as the disease is styled—which renders the lives of some persons a periodical torture to themselves and others. To wrestle violently with the enemy, is more likely to encourage and strengthen than weaken its attacks. Quiet patience with, and resignation to the affliction, will be found more effectual than vehement opposition, and a calm, repeated recourse to God, by the remembrance of His presence, with a fervent aspiration for His almighty aid, more useful than open resistance, which tends but further to agitate the already excited mind and irritated feelings. To bear this most painful condition tranquilly,

and give no evidence of its existence in countenance, word, or manner, is, indeed, a highly meritorious and exalted practice of true virtue. If you are liable to this very trying mental malady, take refuge in prayer as soon as you feel its approach. Fly to Jesus, and Mary, and your blessed angel, and having implored their assistance, use gentle efforts to turn your attention from yourself; occupy your mind quietly in some pursuit, which will rather unbend and recreate it, than severely tax its powers; try to lose sight of your tormentor, and gradually its influence over you will weaken, and, perhaps, finally die away.

You need not be told how unamiable moody people are; how much real pain they often give during the continuance of the ill-humoured fit, or how extremely unpleasant and distressing their variability renders even necessary intercourse with them. Before they can be accosted, their looks must be watched, to ascertain the state of the moral thermometer, and their manner studied to discover whether this is one of their bright, or one of their cloudy days, for on this fact depends the result of the application. Surely it is degrading to a rational creature to have it said, that before she can be spoken to, measures must be taken to know whether she is in a good or a bad humour, and even respect for yourself must prevent you ever permitting this to be truly

observed of you; but so, also, must a far higher motive—the desire, first, to sanctify your soul by the practice of interior self-denial; and, secondly, to contribute, by the amiability of your piety, to the happiness of your home, which happiness a moody temper will effectually overcast, if not utterly destroy.

While the sullen temper silently bears away its resentment, to brood over it in secret, and the sensitive temper shrinks from every shadow, and starts at every look, and the discontented temper frets its life away over evils apparent to none but its own diseased vision, the passionate temper explodes suddenly when least expected; and though like the lightning, its emblem, it flashes but to vanish, like the lightning too, it leaves traces, and often ineffaceable ones, of its devastating passage. Passion, as a temporary mental alienation, cannot, it is evident, fail to involve the most fearful consequences;—reason incapable of discerning right from wrong; the will acknowledging no guidance but the blind impulse of frenzy; anger let loose in all its violence and impetuosity;—surely the rushing avalanche, as it dashes madly over the mountain, sweeping away to destruction every object it encounters, is not an exaggerated type of the ruin wrought by passion in the soul, over which the torrent has poured in unresisted fury. In the excitement

of ungoverned passion, the voice of duty is drowned; the upbraidings of conscience are unheeded or unheard; the most sacred relations are forgotten; words are spoken, and deeds are done, which no after tears of sorrow can wash away; and insults are offered to feeling, which no subsequent evidence of affection can fully atone for, or repair. It is a great, though common mistake in the passionate, to imagine that all their outrages are at once blotted out by the simple admission that because they spoke or acted under the influence of anger, they really were not conscious of wounding. They were responsible agents none the less, although through their own fault they became temporary maniacs, and in the sight of God they are accountable for the consequences of passion, because the surrender of reason to its dominion was their voluntary act.

If your temper is hasty, pray daily, hourly, to Him who is meek and humble of heart, to inspire you with a share in his own gentle spirit. Remember that he told you to learn of Himself the divine lesson of meekness, and present yourself accordingly for admission among his favoured disciples, beseeching Him to be himself your Master; to breathe his instructions into your heart with his own irresistible accents of love and mildness; to model your heart on the pattern of his own, and to give you grace in the hour of

trial, to substitute for the angry word just hovering on your lips, an aspiration for his aid, and a prayer for those who try you. And as passion takes you unawares, endeavour to counteract the danger of its sudden surprises by constant vigilance. Always try to feel that the foe may be near, although you do not see him; and then when he does show his head, you will be ready to meet him bravely. Never speak when you feel angry, or you will be sure to say more than you ought, and more than you intended, and how sorry you will be on cool reflection to find that you have spoken disrespectfully to an elder, or unkindly to an equal, or rudely to an inferior; forgotten yourself, as a lady, no less than as a Christian! When all irritable emotion has subsided with time, you will generally find that the observation, which in the moment of anger you deemed quite allowable or even necessary, not only might, but ought to have been suppressed, and you will rejoice that you suffered reason to retain the empire, of which passion would fain have deprived it to your cost.

The foregoing are some few among the various shades which go to make up the many coloured picture of evil temper. You can scarcely view that repulsive picture without horror, yet it is, notwithstanding, salutary to look at it occasionally; so that if from want of watchfulness,

selfish indulgence should creep into your practice, and threaten almost unconsciously to yourself to become a habit, you may be roused in time from your slumber, and startled into a recognition of the necessity of perseverance in your warfare against self. That unsubdued temper is the rock of domestic felicity there can be no doubt; that youth is the time for overcoming all that is evil in the temper needs as little argument to prove; admitting these two principles, do not conclude this chapter without having seriously and firmly resolved to take your measures accordingly.

In order to render your piety amiable, and your home happy through its influence, not only must you correct all that is defective in your own temper, but you must, moreover, bear patiently all that is trying in the tempers of others. In fact, this second branch of the subject may be considered as identified with the first, so close is the connection. It will be an exercise of good temper on your part to bear with the disagreeable humours of those around you; and should you fail in such forbearance, you cease to merit your claim to be called good tempered. Always remember, that the heart enslaved to passion is, and must be, miserable; and look rather in pity than in anger on its victims. Think how frail you are yourself, and considering how consoling

compassion and consideration would be to you in the hour of your weakness, extend to others the mercy you personally need. Never provoke an already irritated mind by recrimination or rejoinder, or mortifying ridicule, or teazing contradiction; never contend for an opinion; never evince resentment at an annoyance, nor maintain coolness in consequence. Disputes must be sustained by two parties; if you refuse to assume the character of one, the contention must necessarily cease. If silence be the readiest means of restoring ruffled peace, observe it jealously; if a word seem more likely to be effectual, then speak that "mild word which turns away wrath." Let the calmness of your bearing be as oil on the troubled waters; the kindness of your smile as the rainbow after a storm; and the gentleness of your voice as the olive branch of the dove—a harbinger of renewed harmony and union. But that you may thus command the angry feelings of others, you must first learn to command your own; and that you may exercise so great and happy an influence in your home, you must previously have established the conviction there, that because your piety is true it is amiable and practical; and that it is because your piety is amiable and practical, that your temper is ever under due subjection.

You cannot have perused the preceding re-

marks without observing that control over the temper and discipline of the feelings, tends no less to form the lady, than the Christian, lying as they do at the very foundation of that true, genuine, cordial politeness, which is but the external garb of self-denial, humility, and charity. Very many persons wholly deficient in the spirit of self-denial, and total strangers to the virtues of charity and humility, are, it is true, polite, according to the worldly acceptation of the term, yet their politeness is but superficial; it is a garment assumed for company, only to be too often laid aside at home, where, as a compensation for the temporary restraint, selfishness indulges its caprices to the full. While the worldling reserves her politeness for out-door display, home is the especial theatre of that of the Christian. Always calm and self-possessed, and therefore on her guard; always attentive to the feelings of those around her, and therefore never surprised into a hasty word or rude remark; always forgetful of self, and therefore never opposing her own inclinations to the wishes of others; always deferential to her superiors in age and position, and therefore alive to her parents' slightest wishes—attentive to their least remarks; always humble, and therefore desirous rather to listen than to speak; always kind, and therefore anxious to transfer to others the opportunity of

displaying conversational abilities; always reserved, and therefore never betrayed into boisterous laughter, unfeminine tones, or a dictatorial style of address; always dignified, and therefore never awkward, embarrassed, or affected; always simple and true, and therefore assuming no unfounded pretensions to wit or brilliancy; always amiable and good natured, and therefore quite ready to contribute her share to cheerful conversation, without desiring to engross it: she, the true Christian, the self-denying disciple of the Saviour, the dutiful daughter, the affectionate sister, the devoted friend, is also the model of true politeness, that of the heart. An acquaintance with the external forms of society may be easily acquired, and is quite necessary; but true politeness is exclusively the growth of practical piety, and will never be learned in its perfection except in that Divine school where the renunciation of the will is the fundamental maxim, and death to selfish inclination the elementary lesson.

CHAPTER XII.

THIRD FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.—PRACTICAL CHARITY.

To say that the self-sacrificing spirit necessary to the realization of your earnest desire to render your home happy can be acquired without difficulty, or that the forbearance requisite in your intercourse even with the most affectionate and amiable of relatives, can be practised without an effort, would be to assert what everybody's personal experience contradicts. No doubt you will have many a conflict with poor, weak nature, before you can so far command excited feeling, as to give no external evidence of its existence; and many a struggle with self-love's promptings, before you have so far mastered them, as to succeed in silencing their first whisperings. The work before you is unquestionably arduous, yet less so on a near approach than it, perhaps, at first sight appears. The original impression of its difficulty weakens or vanishes when you come to remember, that it is to be the work not of nature, but of grace, and that it is not you alone who are to accomplish it, but the power of God in you. And then, in the mere motive which urges

you to undertake it, lies a principle of strength, which will fortify you against many obstacles, and bear you through many trials. Your hope of perseverance in the career of self-immolating virtue, depends to so great an extent on the power of the motive you propose to yourself in entering on it, that you will do well early to give this very important point the attention it deserves; and from the onset, firmly and solidly to establish in your heart that great, high, ennobling, spiritualizing motive of divine charity, which, while imparting supernatural merit, and attaching a supernatural recompense to all you do for your neighbour, will at the same time facilitate and even sweeten those sacrifices to fraternal duty, which but for its heavenly influence might sometimes seem too painful to our selfish natures.

Charity to your neighbour, for the sake of God! The very thought sweeps away many difficulties, and gives courage to confront those that remain. Think for a moment of the debt of love you owe to God, and you will feel it a happiness that he provides you an opportunity of discharging a part of your obligations to Him in the person of your neighbour, with whom it has pleased him in a manner to identify his rights.

How many motives you have to love God! All the reasons which urge you to love your

parents and friends and benefactors on earth, disappear in presence of those you have for loving God, or rather, merge in, and are absorbed by them, since creatures are in truth but the medium of those blessings of which God is the direct and immediate source. It was God who gave you your own particular parents; those parents you love so well and so deservedly. Among the great mass of human parents, might not others have fallen to your lot, less tender, less devoted, than the dear authors of your being? There are such things in creation as unnatural parents; why did not the title apply to yours? Because even your very cradle was overshadowed by God's mercies, and because "from your mother's womb the Lord was your protector," (Psalm xxi. 11). Then your parents were Catholics; why this again? They were practically religious, too, and trained you early to honour religion. They moreover understood the advantages of a liberal education, and took care to provide such for you. Why, why all this, except because God loved you, and therefore rendered the solicitude of your parents an instrument in his own divine hands for the promotion of your welfare. Why, but because from your mother's womb, from your birth and long before, the Lord was your God and your protector? Then again, the education accorded you by the united love of your

Father in heaven and your parents on earth; how many countless blessings has it not included? Led by God's love, like the little Samuel, into his own sanctuary, not only have you received the advantages of a good education, in the worldly acceptation of the term, but been made a rich participator in the far more precious blessings of careful spiritual training for eternity. Placed by a sweet and loving Providence in the quiet retirement of a religious establishment, you were early taught the value of virtue, and the means of acquiring it; enlightened on the defects of your character, and the means of correcting them; made familiar with your everlasting destiny, and the conditions necessary for its realization; shown at a safe distance, both the attractions and the dangers of the world, that you might learn in time to form a correct estimate of the one, and arm yourself against the other. The helps of religion were showered on you in profusion; the holy Sacrifice your daily oblation; the bread of angels your constant food; good advice your perpetual encouragement; good example your hourly support. "What could the Lord do for his vineyard that he hath not done?" (Is. v. 4.) "Surely he hath not done as much for every nation, nor made his judgments thus manifest to them," (Ps. cxlvii. 20.)

Invaluable as are the favours already con-

sidered, they do not exhaust the list. It is hard to say whether the generosity of love is displayed most magnificently in lavishing benefits, or in bearing patiently with ingratitude. At any rate, whatever be the relative magnitude of these two different practical proofs of charity, there can be no doubt that you are indebted to God equally for both. Can you not remember a time, perhaps many a time, when instead of corresponding with God's mercies in your regard, you made use of them only to offend Him? when instead of meeting his loving advances, you fled fast and far away from them? when instead of following in the sweet odour of his heavenly perfumes, you took the opposite path of passion and self-indulgence? And meantime, He, the Good Shepherd, kept his vigilant eye on the wandering sheep; He pursued it by his sweet solicitations, his gentle entreaties, his tender, unreproaching warnings. With his own hand he disengaged it from the thorns and brambles of sin amidst which it had become entangled; with his own voice he welcomed it back to his bosom; with his own blood he washed away its stains in the tribunal of penance; with his own arms he clasped it, when scarcely daring to look on its outraged Benefactor, it tremblingly approached among worthier guests to the banquet table spread by the hands of angels. All this you know to have been realized again and again

in your regard. You surely have not forgotten that patient love. You have not forgotten, you cannot forget, how often, how fully, how freely your all-merciful Redeemer forgave your ingratitude; how generously he accepted the first sigh of sorrow that burst from your heart; how nobly he pardoned, each time you came before Him a suppliant for mercy, although alas! foreseeing that the transgression would be repeated, and the petition for mercy become needful again, "He remembered that you are dust, and because he is a merciful and compassionate Lord, he did not deal with you according to your sins; but as far as the east is from the west, so far did he remove your iniquities from you," (Ps. cii.) Oh! for how many blessings, spiritual and temporal, are you not indebted to your eternal Benefactor! How many purely personal blessings, to say nothing of those you share in common with the rest of men! It were vain indeed to undertake the catalogue; only an angel's mind could contain, and an angel's lips enumerate them. Would that we had an angel's heart to love the Giver!

It is not only the remembrance of His benefits which should stimulate us to love God; in the consideration of His own divine perfections we find other perhaps still stronger motives for that love. He is worthy to be loved, not alone

because he is infinitely good to us, but also because he is infinitely good and perfect in Himself. He alone is holy; He alone the Lord; He alone Most High. Because of their infinity, His divine attributes must ever be incomprehensible to our finite minds; we should nevertheless make them the object of our constant study, in so far as he deigns to permit us a glimpse of them; and the more we do so, the more profoundly shall we admire, the more reverentially adore them. The more we accustom ourselves to behold the revelation of God's perfections in the external world, the more deeply shall we be impressed with their beauty and attractions. The more we learn to hear their accents in the thousand voices of nature, the more will our advancing love keep pace with our increasing knowledge of them. As we listen to these voices, we shall find that while one chaunts the praises of his glory, and another tone takes up the strain in homage to his power, and a third hymns benedictions to his providence, all unanimously proclaim the presence of his ever-living, ever-acting love,—and after listening long and intently to the canticle, we shall conclude with joyous gratitude, that it is into our own hearts we must turn if we would hear the responsive echo; into our own hearts we must look when we want thoroughly to understand the character

of God's love for his creatures;—for those hearts whisper, that for our happiness God made this glorious world; and it seems to us, that in making beings so unworthy the objects of his love, He has added a new feature to its generosity — a new ray to its magnificence. Pondering on all He has done for us, we come to understand better and better how amiable He is, and to love him less with reference to ourselves, than because of His own essential perfections; and with renewed faith and hope we exclaim, "Who is like to thee, O Lord?" (Ps. xxxiv. 10.) "The God of my heart, and my portion for ever!" (Ibid. lxxii. 26.)

Although it is quite certain that we never can adequately appreciate God's mercies, or make Him a suitable return, it is not the less incumbent on us to do the little we can towards liquidating the vast, the incalculable debt. Yet, when we come to consider the matter closely, what is there we can give to Him who "is our God, and therefore has no need of our goods?" Oh! much that He condescends to value; our hearts, our love, our lives, our faculties, our energies, the unreserved devotion of all our being; and in addition, those services, which, though he does not need them in his own person, he deigns to ask for in that of our neighbour, declaring, that if rendered to our

fellow-beings, he will consider them rendered to himself. Here then is to be the exalted principle of your self-denying practice; here the sanctifying motive of your fidelity to home duties; here the mainspring of your unvarying gentleness, your unalterable forbearance, your amiability of spirit, your kindness of demeanour. You might grow weary of continually yielding to the exactions of creatures; you might tire of perpetually trying to accommodate yourself to their disagreeable humours; you might find constant renunciation of self for the sake of others, too severe a tax on your magnanimity, and unceasing efforts to promote their happiness too strong a test of your benevolence; but when you come to overlook them altogether, to forget the creature, or rather to see him identified with the Creator, the aspect of things alters totally. You feel that the concessions which a capricious, exacting fellow-being has, perhaps, no right to demand, God, your Benefactor, your Father, your Redeemer, can claim on thousands of titles; and bowing beneath the power, the mighty power of love, you proceed promptly, cheerfully, joyfully to render your neighbour those services which become a sweet yoke and a light burden from the moment the hand of God is recognized to be the instrument which imposes them. If you learn to look on fraternal charity

as the rich fund whence you are to draw supernatural treasures for the payment of the debt of love you owe to God, you will be only anxious to draw incessantly on the exhaustless store, and avaricious in your eagerness to grasp those heavenly treasures. Charity is an active, not a passive feeling, and if its spirit once acquire dominion over your heart, it will quickly manifest itself in your actions, and extend its influence to all within reach. The first claimants on your charity are, as you have seen, the inmates of your home, in whose regard its duties will be fully exercised, if you enter perfectly and practically into the spirit of the last two chapters. Those duties you will render supernaturally meritorious for yourself if you farther enter into the spirit of this. It will perhaps be more correct to say that without the spirit of this for a foundation, you cannot comply with the requirements of the preceding. If you do not cordially compassionate the frailties of others, you will not bear with them meekly; and if you do not imbue your heart with the maxim of ever doing to others, as you would that others did to you, you will not be considerate in your feelings, moderate in your judgments, or patient, forgiving, and unselfish, in your practice. But with charity for your guiding principle, the love of God for your animating motive, you will be

all this and more; for true, genuine, Christian "charity is patient, is kind; envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up, is not ambitious; seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," (1 Cor. xiii.) Surely it is true to say, that having charity, "all good things come together with her." (Wisd. vii. 11.)

Home, though the primary claimant on your charity, is not the only one. If you really love your neighbour as yourself, for the love of God, you will be glad to extend the sphere of your active fraternal love, as far as may be, desiring that, if possible, it might embrace all creatures. Among the poor of Jesus Christ, you will find vast opportunities for its exercise. The declaration of your Sovereign Lord, and all merciful Redeemer, that, "whatever you do for the least of his brethren, he considers as done for himself," ought surely to be a powerful stimulus to your efforts for the relief of the indigent. If this Gospel truth were more attentively considered, would not insensibility to the wants of the poor be less general among the rich? Would not many hard hearts grow soft, and many callous spirits compassionate and tender? Make of these sacred words your own particular study, that, learning to identify the interests of the

poor with those of your Redeemer, His pure love alone may be the motive of your efforts to comfort and assist His suffering members. Never forget that natural goodness and kindness of heart, though a most amiable and praiseworthy disposition, is not a virtue, and be careful, therefore, to elevate all your acts of charity to supernatural dignity, by purity of intention, that so they may be glorifying to God, and meritorious for yourself. Share with Jesus Christ, in the person of the poor, all you have; give alms according to the extent of your ability; "if you have much, give abundantly; if you have little, take care to bestow willingly a little," (Tob. iv. 9.) Give unostentatiously; give with the sweetness of manner which adds so much to the value of the donation. Remember that the poor have feelings as well as yourself, and do not wound those feelings by accompanying your offering with harsh, reproachful words. If you have nothing else to bestow, you can, at least, give sympathy; that costs nothing, yet it is as healing balm to the wounded spirit. The poverty which, having known better days, seeks to hide its fallen fortunes from the world, and pines and wastes away in secret misery, trying, to the last, to avert by its small industrial resources the hourly approaching moment of absolute want—this, as the worthiest, should also be the

first object of your charity. If you consult your parents, they will assist or direct you in seeking out such objects; they will aid you by their advice in the judicious disposal of your alms, and, perhaps, make you also the happy dispenser of their own. Never forget, in dealing with the poor, that the immortal soul of the wretched mendicant in his tattered garments, is as precious in the sight of God as that of the monarch, clad in regal robes; that both were made according to the same pattern, redeemed at the same price, and created for the same eternal happiness. Do not, then, relieve the body, without trying also to provide for the wants of that undying, and, perhaps, more needy soul. Tell the afflicted and starving children of poverty, of God, and God's love for all the creatures of His hands—a love, of which the trials he sends are often the best proof. Tell them of Him whose predilection was for the poor, who spent his life of privation among the poor, and died, at last, in the very arms of extreme and abject poverty. Tell them to look from the cold, cheerless hovel they call their home, to his first equally chill and comfortless dwelling-place in the stable, and to raise their eyes from the miserable bed on which their aching limbs recline, to the hard cross which formed the last pillow for his thorn-crowned

head—the last couch for his tortured, exhausted, dying frame. Tell them that as Jesus, who died in anguish, rose again in glory, so will they, too, awake to a new state of existence, if they suffer resignedly with Him here—a new state in which the very remembrance of their former miseries shall have passed away—absorbed in the bliss purchased by patient endurance of time's transient tribulations. "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass, that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. . . Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God, to all them that give it," (Tobias, iv. 7, 11, 12.) "Make unto you a friend of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings," (St. Luke, xvi. 9).

To contribute to the funds of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, is another most meritorious exercise of charity. That you could make no better use of a small portion of your superfluity you will easily recognize, if you but think of the many nations which lie buried in the darkness of infidelity, because the holy missionary, whose pecuniary resources are small, just in proportion as his zeal is great, cannot

procure the means of reaching those distant shores, or of maintaining life there, when he has overcome the difficulties of the way. What a happiness to facilitate his noble project, and thus indirectly become a medium of communicating the blessings of faith and civilization to beings sharing your own nature; souls redeemed as yours, by the sufferings and death of a God! What a consolation it will be on your dying bed to know that millions of voices are raised to plead for you, and that when the hand of God lies heavy on you in the chastening fires to be passed through before you can enter the undefiled courts of his eternal temple, the continued supplications of those same voices will ascend to His throne to appease His justice and accelerate the hour of your everlasting union with Him! Think of these things seriously and lovingly, and you will be only too happy to lend your mite for the maintenance of the glorious Association for the Propagation of the Faith. You are aware, that beside the small pecuniary contribution, you are required, in order to gain the Indulgence, to say daily, "Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father," &c., adding the words, "St. Francis Xavier pray for us, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ." The "Our Father, and Hail Mary," of your morning or night prayers, may be offered for this intention if you please.

You will also exercise your charity in a manner most acceptable to God, by instructing the ignorant in the Christian doctrine; teaching the catechism in your parish chapel on Sundays, and making sure that all who come within your reach know, at least, the principal mysteries of religion, and the other points essential for salvation. This will be as clear and strong an evidence as you can give to God of your gratitude for the blessing of religious instruction so prodigally bestowed on yourself.

The great obstacle to all the sweet, consoling works of charity is again selfishness. There are persons who never have anything to give the poor except harsh, haughty refusals; human beings with hearts so obdurate, that they deem it quite a hardship that poverty should cross their path at all, even though only to find its appeals rejected, and its hopes mocked; Christians so dead to their responsibilities, that they would shrink from the mere mention of the familiar association with the poor, implied by visiting them in their sickness, counselling them in their difficulties, consoling them in their afflictions, and instructing them in their ignorance.

Forgetting that all men are equal in the eyes of the great Father of all, they deem it a degradation to mix among the poor, a species of contamination to stoop to intercourse with a class

beneath them in social position. Losing sight of their imperative obligation to "do good, as well as to avoid evil," they cast no thought on the multitudes whom their superfluities might relieve, their instructions enlighten, their vigilance preserve from evil, or their zeal and charity reclaim. They will not interest themselves in the concerns of the poor, because pride forbids the imaginary condescension implied by the fact. They never have anything to bestow on the friendless, starving, desolate victim of multiplied wants, because they are too much enslaved to selfishness, to understand even in theory, the meaning of sacrificing the least personal gratification for the sake of any body, least of all the poor. They cannot give bread to a famishing suppliant, because they will not deny themselves any single costly article of dress their vanity pants for; they cannot afford to meet the just pecuniary demands of persons in their employment,—those for instance, of the poor needlewoman, whose livelihood partially depends on the miserable pittance earned in their service, at the cost of sight, and strength, and health, and life at last, because they will not debar themselves of a luxury their morbid selfishness craves. That scanty pittance cannot be doled out until it has first been cut down a little lower, nor given at all just at present, for extravagance

and selfishness would rather appropriate it to their own ends for some time longer. Oh! to what a variety of meannesses selfishness will stoop! What a multiplicity of resources it can create for the attainment of its objects! In what countless ways it shows its hateful form, and at the end of all how entirely it deceives and defeats itself! Selfishness is the desire of happiness through personal gratification; but what a mistake to imagine that a life spent in selfish gratification can be a happy life! Self-love is a despot so cruel and insatiable, that true peace and liberty are assuredly only for those who have broken its chains, and trampled them bravely under foot. If the heart, dead to all emotions but those connected with self, could know how much pure happiness it loses by its incapacity to sympathise with others, it would soon grieve over, and for ever renounce, its fatal error. There is happiness in rendering even an animal happy; what then in consoling an afflicted fellow creature? in giving food to the hungry, and raiment to the chill? What in instilling heavenly lessons of patience into the rebellious spirit, and bringing glad tidings of the great joy to come, to hearts sunk in the deep gloom of despair? What in drying the tear of the desolate, brightening even for a moment the features wrinkled rather by sorrow than by time,

recalling to the life of hope the breaking heart, that but for you had ere now broken; and guiding into the "pleasant ways" of virtue, the young, inexperienced, and unprotected, who without your aid had perhaps strayed into the devious paths of evil? All this is real happiness, but happiness unknown to the selfish, through their own grievous fault.

Do not debar yourself of the exquisite enjoyment of doing good to others. Open wide your heart to the influence of divine charity, and in proportion as its empire gains strength, so will that of selfishness be weakened, until at last it retires altogether from the contest, humbled and crest-fallen, leaving to the love of God supreme dominion over the happy soul, which possesses with it the anticipated joys of paradise.

It is thus, as you see, by the practice of home virtues, vivified and sanctified by charity, that you will accomplish your holy design of leading a useful, no less than a Christian life. A useful life! How much it embraces! Household concerns to be attended to, and household wants foreseen; the younger members of the family to receive their first, strong, durable impressions of piety, as well as their first initiation in human knowledge; the elder ones to be considered for, amused, aided in their little casual wants; parents to be relieved of their fatiguing duties; ser-

vants to be directed, superintended, instructed; all to be made happy; the poor to be attended to, and taught; accounts to be kept; and meantime, mental cultivation not to be neglected; above all, prayer not to be omitted. Truly a useful life is an active, if not a laborious one; but then, in compensation, it is the only life that can impart that true happiness known to those alone who purchase it, by sacrificing self on the altar of divine charity. How sad a reflection, that to the majority this useful life is a thing unknown! How deplorable a fact, that so many young persons can give no account of their day, further than that it was spent, perhaps in lounging over a silly novel, or perhaps "out," that is, in frivolity and idle talking! Verily they have their reward here, in the emptiness of heart and weariness of mind inseparable from such a life. And how will it be with them when life's night sets in, and the time for working has passed for ever!

CHAPTER XIII.

FOURTH FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.—THE REGULATION OF CONVERSATION.

As there are certain circumstances in which conversation is inevitable, and that without due restraint, the chances are considerably in favour of its being perverted into an occasion of sin, one of your resolutions at your entrance into society—that peculiarly critical period in your spiritual career—must be to adopt all necessary precautions against its being so to you.

Uncharitable conversation is unfortunately most prevalent in the world; personalities form, with very many, a favourite topic, and through some strange perversion in our nature, it happens that personal frailties and eccentricities are, in general, a much more attractive subject of discussion, than the good and amiable qualities which, if the trouble were taken to seek for them, would surely be found intermingled with, or underlying those weaknesses. Branching out from foibles and peculiarities, the spirit of uncharitable criticism extends its range into

the regions of more marked and positive evil, unveiling defects, which, but for its agency, had been for ever hidden from the listener; lessening, if it does not wholly destroy, the reputation of the absent, and leaving an impression to the disadvantage of a fellow-creature, which perhaps no length of time will fully remove.

To comprehend the hatefulness of detraction, and imbibe all the horror of it which it deserves, you need but contemplate its portrait as drawn by the eloquent pen of the great Massillon. He calls it "a scorching fire which blights all it touches; which in a moment reduces to dust and ashes, what seemed but just before so fair, and bright, and durable; which blackens what it cannot consume, and never emits so clear or vivid a light, as when proceeding on the work of devastation." He terms it "secret pride, which discovers the mote in our brother's eye, while it conceals the beam in our own; base envy, which, unable to endure superiority, does its best to derogate from it; mean duplicity, which flatters in public, to lacerate in private; a fertile source of dissension and confusion; an enemy of charity and peace; a fountain of deadly poison which communicates its venom to everything within reach. Its very aspect," he says, "hides a depth of disguised malice; its silence is but a weapon of a new form; its gestures, its

movements, its looks, all are infected with its own corruption." Could higher colouring be added to the revolting picture of detraction!

Many pretexts are urged in extenuation of the vice by those addicted to it; for instance, they will undertake to justify a malicious remark by the plea that really no harm was meant, and no object aimed at but amusement. "Amusement at your neighbour's frailties!" exclaims the last quoted illustrious Christian orator. "Oh! what cruel amusement is that founded on a fellow-creature's pain and humiliation! And how can those remarks be qualified as innocent, which sport with defects more justly calculated to inspire sympathy and compassion than to promote diversion?"

"Thoughtlessness," he continues, "is another ordinary excuse for detraction, but is not the imaginary extenuation a real aggravation of guilt? Can thoughtlessness in matters of duty be pardonable in a Christian, whose principles should be steadily fixed, and whose practice should coincide with those principles? Besides, as the wound of a random arrow is just as severe as that of one deliberately aimed, so is your bitter observation just as galling and injurious, as if it had been fully premeditated. The whole code of Christianity being included in the law of charity, may you not very fairly be said to

set its remaining ordinances at nought when you can plead thoughtlessness and forgetfulness in extenuation of the violation of this?"

The insignificance of the matter is, again, commonly urged in justification of detraction. You will often hear it said, that it really is difficult to understand how the trivial observation in question can possibly give pain, and that such pain, being quite disproportioned to its exciting cause, it can be rationally traced only to the unmeaning sensitiveness of the person aggrieved. But if the remark be so trifling, what need for making it at all? Is it not discreditable that your power of self-command is inadequate to the suppression of a word? A word—one single word—may sometimes involve a profound meaning, and even a silent gesture may deeply wound charity. The habit of such remarks is most dangerous. "The habit of repeating trifles, to the disadvantage of others, and freely discussing even their publicly recognized failings, will, most assuredly," says le Père de la Colombière, "plane the way for the vice of detraction." Persons who allow themselves these practices, are quite resolved, they say, never to outstep a certain barrier, but they know not, it is clear, either the extent or the power of the heart's corruption. They sport with a lion which will eventually prove too strong; a lion which will

now and then give terrific evidences of its fury, and at last, breaking its chains, rush forth wildly to devastate and destroy. If, then, you desire peace of mind, and purity of conscience, refrain from speaking ill of any body, and that without weighing whether the matter in question be trivial or serious, mortally or venially criminal, or sinful at all." Those who maintain that an unkind remark should give no annoyance, because of the insignificance of its subject, would do well to apply here the golden rule, and see whether a similar comment repeated to them, as made of themselves, would be agreeable; whether it would excite no momentary resentment or mortification; whether it would raise no blush, and start no tear. This personal test will, perhaps, convince them that it is easier to inflict pain than they chose to fancy, as long as some other than themselves was the object of the experiment.

Detraction is not only extremely sinful, but, moreover, as you will find on close examination, quite inconsistent with true generosity of heart and refinement of mind. If to attack the defenceless is universally recognized as mean and cowardly, surely it is not less base and despicable to assault the reputation of the absent, who can neither explain away, nor otherwise refute the charges against them. And is it not truly

ungenerous to single out all the defects and blemishes of a character for invidious comment, passing over, at the same time, unnoticed, as if they did not exist, its perhaps more than counterbalancing good and estimable qualities?

For these reasons, but far more because you cannot violate the law of charity without offending God, refrain most cautiously from uncharitable conversation. Never allow yourself an unkind remark of any one; never say of the absent what you would not say in their presence, or be willing to have repeated to them. Make no comment of another, which you would not like to have made of yourself; and then, indeed, you will be shielded from breaches of charity in words. To obtain this grace, say frequently the following prayer, from the pen of the saintly Père de la Colombière—"Place, O Lord! before my mouth a door of prudence and a gate of circumspection, which may effectually close it against detraction, and all words displeasing to thee. Thou hast bestowed on me the faculty of speech, only that I may praise thee, and invite others to join in rendering thee homage. Oh! grant that its exercise may be as far as possible reserved for this end alone. Permit not, I beseech thee, that the lips so frequently and so mysteriously honoured by the sacred contact of thy precious body and blood in the sacrament of

thy love, should ever be profaned by words opposed to charity; and mercifully assist me in adopting every precaution to avert so great a misfortune."

Although it is comparatively easy, with caution and vigilance, guided and sustained by God's grace, to refrain from originating uncharitable conversation, it is less so to avoid an at least apparent participation in it, when started by others, for this requires a degree of moral courage, not always natural in the young.

And again, detraction is so common in the world, that there is danger of your becoming familiarized with, and thus so far thrown off your guard as to be almost insensibly led into it. On the prevalence of the vice, Bossuet writes: "Detraction may still be considered, as it ever was, the seasoning of conversation, which without it is deemed deficient in point and spirit. To banish the weariness which a rational topic is sure to produce, and restore the suspended animation of conversation, detraction must call on its resources; some individual must be held up to ridicule or censure; the private concerns of families, with their hitherto hidden defects and blemishes, must be brought to light; the uncharitable reports and gossip of the day must be detailed circumstantially and wittily; and the audience but a moment before so dull, will shake off its

apathy, arouse all its listening faculties, and lose not a word of the detestable chronicle. Although thanks may not be openly voted to the detractor for his services, the satisfaction they have given is quite apparent to him in the bursts of laughter which greet his sallies, and the significant gestures whose mute eloquence he knows well how to interpret.

You see what need you have to arm yourself with caution and courage, if you are really determined to fulfil your solemn obligation of observing charity yourself, and never encouraging the breach of it by others. That obligation is strictly binding at all times, and under all circumstances, and never can any possible contingency sanction your either openly joining in or indirectly countenancing detraction. However, while fully and practically recognizing the force of the maxim which establishes that "if there were no listeners there would be no detractors," you must be careful that in your anxiety to avoid a sinful violation of charity in one way, you do not forget the claims of that sweet virtue in another. You would not join in detraction for the world, and you are perfectly right, but at the same time you will remember that those who are guilty of it, are perhaps more excusable in the eyes of God than they seem to you; that they, perhaps, have not been well

instructed in, or strongly impressed with their duty in this particular; that there may be extenuations in their case, which would not be admissible in your own, and so, pitying rather than condemning, you will call prudence to your aid, and make no unnecessary demonstration of your sentiments. If you can do so with the requisite tact, change the topic; if not, be quite silent, and never be ashamed if your silence draws on you the imputation of singularity. It is very right to be singular when there is question of a compromise between the law of God and conscience.

The foregoing rule, of course, applies to the society of your elders only, for among companions of your own age and standing you should not tolerate the very semblance of detraction, but maintain the rights of charity bravely, leaving no doubt on the minds of your associates that your neighbour's reputation is with you safe and sacred.

While detraction is unhappily so prevalent in the world, and therefore one of the great dangers you have to apprehend in society, it is also true that you will have opportunities of hearing much agreeable and useful conversation, of which, if you please, you can make your profit. Good conversation is often even more improving than books, for it gives you, with the substance

of books, the judicious comments of mature reflection, and the wise views gleaned from experimental knowledge of life. In order to benefit by useful conversation, you must know how to listen to it, which, if you understand its advantages, you will not find it either difficult or tiresome to do. Rational conversation is distasteful to the frivolous and over talkative, but you must take care never to deserve a rank in either class, and then its flow will meet no obstacle from your preference for puerilities, or your desire of subjects, in which you can yourself take a prominent part. Listen with interest, and let this interest be apparent in your countenance and manner. Be always disposed rather to attend to others, than to speak yourself; yet, when an observation is called for, make it intelligently, and show that you are alive to the topic. Never interrupt the remarks of others, intrude your opinion unasked, or manifest a wish to engross conversation. Beside betraying a want of that diffidence, so attractive in the young, these are inexcusable deficiencies in good breeding.

In the ordinary intercourse of general society, while it would be reprehensible to speak too much, so would it be ill advised to speak too little. Reserve of manner should never be laid aside in that intercourse; but neither should it be carried to such extremes as to impress the world

with the idea that piety is something very morose, and a practically religious life, a life of gloom and misery.

At home, cheerfulness should be the presiding genius of conversation; yet even here, be careful never entirely to throw off restraint in speech. As soon as you do, you will find yourself led into a variety of faults, each small in itself, perhaps, yet tending in the aggregate to disturb your peace of conscience, lessen your facility for living in the divine presence, and diminish your recollection at prayer. There is always danger in allowing free license to the tongue. To do so, is to lose command of that mysterious "bridle," as St. James terms it, with which "the whole body can be led about," (iii. 2). We have already remarked on the evils of useless talking, in the chapter on the "Flight of idleness." Those evils, we may add here, are incurred, not only by talking idly at all times, but also by talking at random and to excess, even at the right. Endeavour betimes to acquire control over your words, and never forget the remark of Fenelon, that "nothing very admirable can be expected from a woman who has not learned to examine her thoughts before she gives them utterance; to express herself in few words when she has occasion to speak, and that

necessity having ceased, to return, from choice, to her temporarily interrupted silence."

"He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his soul: but he that hath no guard on his speech, shall meet with evils," (Prov. xiii. 3). "Make doors and bars to thy mouth. Melt down thy gold and silver, and make a balance for thy words, and a just bridle for thy mouth: and take heed lest thou slip with thy tongue, and fall in sight of thy enemies who lie in wait for thee, and thy fall be incurable unto death," (Ecc. xxviii. 28, 30).

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD INIMICAL TO THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.

When God created the material world in which we live, he made it very beautiful; so beautiful, that his own eyes saw it to be fair, and his own lips pronounced it to be good; and like it, too, in loveliness and all perfection was the moral world as it came forth in the morning of time from the almighty hands which fashioned it; but it was not long before another and a totally dissimilar world sprang up from the very bosom of God's own pure, bright creation;—a new world, the offspring not of heaven, but of hell; the world of sin, which, founded on man's pride, cemented by his ambition, growing with his love of self, and extending with his multiplying vices, overspread at last from end to end the wondrous work of Omnipotence, not only sweeping away in its pestilential progress that glorious primæval innocence which was the richest gem of the dawning world of grace, but impairing the beauty even of the physical creation, which but for sin's shadow had never worn a wrinkle on its brow, or sent forth a noxious weed or

sterile bramble from its bosom. Wherever human passions have built themselves an empire, there exists that new world, that world of evil which you are taught to dread and exhorted to shun—first, as the daring enemy of God himself; and next, as your own uncompromising and deadly foe.

That the world is the enemy of God, you will at once perceive, if you examine a little closely into the grounds of the assertion. First, the maxims of the world are subversive of the maxims of the Gospel. Jesus Christ, our divine Master, taught humility, poverty, mortification, self-denial, love of obscurity, love of suffering. He taught that we must become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven; that what is great before men is an abomination before God; that we shall be blessed when we weep, and happy when we are persecuted and reviled; that our only concern is to save our souls, and that these being lost, it will avail us nothing to have gained the universe. The world teaches, on the contrary, that wealth is the supreme good, because it excludes privation with its attendant sufferings, and obscurity with its accompanying humiliations. It teaches that poverty is despicable, and mortification irrational; that self-denial is impracticable, and self-indulgence the end of existence; that the present life is a legitimate

object of exclusive solicitude, and the future too shadowy, or at least too remote, to merit much consideration. Shaped into plain, unvarnished words, these maxims sound appallingly impious; yet they are the maxims on which the world acts; the maxims which serve it as practical rules of conduct, whether they be expressed in words or not. Can you hesitate to pronounce them subversive of the lessons of the Gospel?

Clearly to understand how pernicious and reprehensible they are, we have only to remember that Jesus Christ, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father, came from heaven to condemn them, and "selected," says Bossuet, "for the accomplishment of this design, a means as efficacious as it was unexampled, allowing himself to be judged by the world, that the manifest injustice of the iniquitous sentence might of itself invalidate the world's future judgments." To imitate the world, and adopt the practical guidance it acknowledges, is effectually to follow its maxims, even though a momentary start of real or feigned horror may now and then be produced by a formal exposition of the anti-christian code.

The world will not openly avow to you its maxims, nor convey its lessons in the bold, fearless tone of conscious rectitude. It will insinuate rather than speak them, lest if you heard too plainly, you should be startled and fly. It will just lightly

breathe that the pious impressions of school days were but the workings of an ardent mind, which must now learn to lay aside its enthusiasm, and adopt less fanciful views. It will stealthily whisper that the religious exercises to which you attach so much importance, although well suited to the cloister, would be wholly misplaced in the world, and should be got rid of as quickly and as quietly as possible. It will paint virtue in false colours, making it appear ridiculous or morose. It will try to persuade you that you really were a bad judge of your own affairs, when you imagined yourself happy in retirement, contented without excitement, and absolutely joyful amidst the tame and insipid amusements of school; and, in conclusion, it will place before you a vivid picture of the far more attractive pleasures to which you are yet a stranger, but may soon be introduced to, if you will.

When the voice of the charmer first sounds in your ear, then will be the time practically to profess your faith; then the hour to manifest your belief in those everlasting maxims which never can pass away, even though the heavens and the earth themselves should vanish; then the glorious opportunity of renewing and confirming those sacred baptismal engagements by which you solemnly promised for ever to renounce the maxims, with the works of Satan.

Resist bravely that first treacherous whisper; turn from it with the same horror as if you beheld the tempter in visible form, and remember that your chances of keeping yourself "unspotted from the world," as you pass through its temptations, depend to a great extent on the resolution you display in your first encounter with your insidious foe. "Resist the devil and he will fly from you," (St. James, iv. 7); but then resist him promptly, for if his pernicious maxims once gain even partial influence over you, you will find it difficult indeed to arrest the progress, or calculate the consequences of that fatal influence.

That the spirit of the world is contradictory of the spirit of Christ, and that the world is consequently in this respect again the enemy of God, is a truth as self-evident as the preceding. The spirit of Christ is a spirit of humility, meekness, patience, self-sacrifice, forgiveness of injuries, and contempt of earthly things. The spirit of the world is a spirit of pride, arrogance, anger, hatred, avarice, and selfishness. The two are diametrically opposed; and one can as little unite with the other, as light can blend with darkness, or truth combine with falsehood. One of the two must henceforth actuate you; which shall it be? Your resolution on this head has no doubt been already taken in all sincerity, and

you have besought God with great earnestness to strengthen you in its observance, and to preserve you from ever admitting into your heart the spirit of the world—the spirit of Satan. But all is not yet done; nothing is in truth begun. The world lies before you, armed with a weapon of gigantic power in its all but omnipotent example; and against the influence of that example it is that you have now to struggle. It is a wild torrent that bears ruin on its raging waters; yet may you hope, through God's mercy, to pass unharmed through the billows, if in proportion to your distrust of self, is your confidence in the guidance of your heavenly Pilot. Cling fast to the helm of Faith, and with your eyes fixed on the distant shores of the everlasting home to come, you will steadily persist in your first strong and holy determination, that the example of the world shall never entice you from the narrow road that leads to God. You will keep in view the far different example of martyrs, and confessors, and saints of every grade, and with them "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the world, and looking unto the reward, you will rather choose to be afflicted with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time," (Heb. xi. 26, 25). Far from permitting yourself to be carried away by the torrent of the world's example, your aim

will be, on the contrary, to counteract its evil influence as far as your limited sphere of action admits, by practically proving that another and a higher model is yours. Do not say that the example of one insignificant individual like yourself can produce too little impression on the general state of things, to repay you for the vigilance and self-restraint which must enter so largely into your habitual practice, before you can hope to become a shining light of good example. Example possesses a power quite miraculous; it is more eloquent than words; more persuasive than exhortation; more winning than entreaty. It is woman's peculiar mission to preach silently by example, and in this way, first of all, it is, that she is to exercise both at home and abroad, that influence so universally acknowledged as her peculiar attribute. "On woman," says Bourdaloue, "depend the reformation and sanctification of society. If she were truly a Christian, in the genuine, practical meaning of the term, then would the world be constrained by a happy necessity to become Christian too." You are but one, yet if your example be good, there will be in the world one bad example the less, and this is at least a negative gain. You are but one, yet your example may be the means of recalling some one wanderer into the path of salvation; and even though the conquest

should be solitary, the gain for God's glory and your own soul will be positive. That one may attract another, and so the circle may widen; great will be your consolation in the day of reckoning, to discover that your example was its centre; great your glory in heaven, in recompense of having not only denied the spirit of the world entrance into your heart, but moreover diffused around you, for the edification of others, the brilliant light of a life subject to the practical influence of the spirit of faith.

The world is God's foe, thirdly, because its interests are all at variance with the interests of His glory. The accidental glory which creatures can render to God, results from their submission to His will, and their fidelity in accomplishing His designs. His great and only design in creating us, was, that we might devote our being to his service here, and then, as the reward of our obedience, merit to enjoy Him eternally hereafter. But the world's aims all tend to impede this great and beneficent object. Man, created for a destiny but little inferior to that of the angels, is taught by the world's lessons and example to forget that exalted destiny, and to substitute another quite contrary. Instead of God, he learns to make self his end. Coveting permanent possession of the treasures only lent for his temporary use, he sets all his energies to

work to realize them. Losing sight of his high origin and eternal hopes, he tries to make for himself here a lasting city, and binds his soul to it with the silken cords of avarice and self-indulgence. He flings aside the prospect of future bliss, to revel in the enjoyment of present delights. He sacrifices the interests of God's honour to worldly interests; he frustrates the end of his creation, and thus robs the Almighty of the glory which His Sovereign Majesty can derive only from the accomplishment of His own all holy will.

While the world is thus manifestly the enemy of God, it is with equal certainty the friend of Satan—the great battle-plain whereon he contends for the conquests of Jesus, unhappily with very considerable success; the vast harvest field which supplies his riches; the empire which acknowledges his sceptre; the zealous co-operator in his designs; his most faithful ally; his most potent auxiliary. To love the world is then to substitute for God's friendship that of Satan, emphatically styled the world's "prince," (St. John, xiv. 30). Oh, what a sad exchange! To imbibe the spirit of the world, is to contract an unholy alliance with the most Evil One! Oh, what a degradation to the soul destined for union with God and his bright angels! To live according to the maxims of the world, is to

prefer the servitude of the Demon, to the sweet yoke and light burden of the law of God! Oh, what a strange—what a deplorable perversion of heart and reason! "Love not then the world, nor the things which are in the world," (1 St. John, ii. 15); for, "whosoever will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God," (St. James, iv. 4).

And what compensation does the world bestow on those who have preferred its friendship to the friendship of God, and for its sake substituted the interests of Satan for the interests of God's glory? Ah! none, in truth, for its promises are like itself deceitful, and its enjoyments delusive.

"All these," said the Evil Spirit to our divine Lord, in allusion to the kingdoms and empires of the earth which he displayed before his view; "all these will I give thee, if, falling down, thou wilt adore me," (St. Matt. iv. 9). And so he still daily says to his unhappy dupes, through the voice of the world's temptations: "All these will I give thee;" multiplied delights, unrestrained liberty, unceasing enjoyment, perfect happiness, if thou wilt adore me; if thou wilt but wear my golden chains, and abandoning the service of God, take service among my votaries." But the world is the kingdom of the "Father of lies;" and like its lord and master, it is a

deceiver, as none of its adherents, not even the most constant and faithful, have ever thought of controverting. From how many of its devoted servants, has the anguish of a despairing heart wrung an ejaculation similar to that of the once favoured, but finally rejected son of fickle fortune, "Alas! had I but served my God as faithfully as I have served my king, He would not thus abandon me in my grey hairs!" And how strange that with multiplied testimonies to its treachery, even from those who know it best, the world should still retain power to entangle dupes within its toils!

The pleasures which the world holds out are in their own nature as delusive, as the promise to confer them is insincere. They are not real —not true—not substantial—not soul-refreshing —not heart-filling. They are like the bubble which gladdened our childish eyes, as we sent it floating on the air to catch its glorious colouring from the sunbeam; and, lo! just as we looked in wonder at the fairy work of our own little hands, and shouted for joy to see it sail majestically upwards, clad in its rainbow beauty, it burst at our feet, and but for the few drops of moisture which fell as it dissolved, to prove that once it was a reality, we should have been tempted altogether to deny its brief bright being. They are like the mocking mirage of

the desert, which invites the exhausted traveller to lave his burning brow in the cool waters of a placid lake, and rest his aching limbs in the delicious shade of the luxuriant trees that wave their light drapery in the sweet breeze, then fades away as he approaches, to leave him once more a hopeless wanderer through the arid waste, seeking in vain for the fairy vision, and doubting whether the scorching sands have engulfed, or the glowing skies absorbed it.

The world's joys being unreal, must necessarily be evanescent. As it is the very nature of external influences to vary, pleasures dependent on them can never be permanent. The pleasures of the world are essentially dependent on extrinsic causes, their very existence pre-supposing the combination of certain favourable contingencies, and the absence of certain untoward circumstances; and the least failure in either condition sufficing, not alone to destroy, but even to convert them into positive mortifications. How hollow a foundation for enjoyment, then, is that mutable world, where it is so utterly vain to calculate on stability or consistency, and how little worth are pleasures which may be overcast by every flitting cloud; pleasures dependent on the thousand whims of poor, variable beings; pleasures which live in the smiles, and wither in the frowns of capricious mortals; pleasures which flourish in

sunshine alone, and die if exposed to any of the countless casualties of life; pleasures which, had they never known a moment's pause or diminution before, must at least come to a final close at the rapidly approaching hour of death!

Among their many other attendant evils, the pleasures of the world produce a bewildering excitement of imagination, with its consequent ever-increasing thirst for the intoxicating draught by which alone that fictitious excitement is to be maintained. Lassitude and depression, the natural results of excitement, follow by reaction, gradually creating disrelish for the monotonous round of domestic duty—unhealthy yearning for new pastime—feverish desires of more company, and perhaps, in the end, dislike to, and anxiety to escape from a home, which, as it offers no variety, can impart no content. For these great and serious evils, there seems, unhappily, but little hope of cure, inasmuch as the remedy most likely to be resorted to, is precisely that calculated to aggravate the disease.

Be on your guard against that most dangerous faculty, the imagination. Oppose to its attractive, but delusive images, the sober realities of life; the realities of faith; the realities of eternity. Never allow the excitement of first impressions to carry you away, but suspend your judgment until excitement has

yielded to the calm suggestions of reason, still more of religion. Try always to possess yourself, that so you may be enabled to take accurate views, and form correct estimates of life. Under excitement you cannot do this; therefore, you should make it your aim to check its first rising impulses, avoiding also, most cautiously, extreme opinions, fictitious sensibilities, and the exaggeration of feeling manifested in violent attachments or aversions.

Among its other dangers, association with the world powerfully elicits that love of admiration so natural to woman, that it has been called "the second original sin." Hence it comes, that propriety, principle, justice, health, religion—all are sacrificed at the shrine of fashion. Hence springs the love of dress. Hence proceed miserable rivalry, petty vanity, despicable envy. Hence extravagance, debt, and at last ruin. Hence that perversion of taste and judgment which invests flattery with its false fascinations. Never suffer the love of admiration to hold dominion in your heart, for it will surely lead you into many frivolities, and perhaps even into serious derelictions from duty, which you will find ample cause to deplore and blush for. It has been tritely remarked that a woman's head will be always more valued for what is *in* it, than for what is *on* it. Let good sense reign in yours, and it will teach

you to adapt your toilet to your circumstances and position. It will not suffer you to trangress the rules of strict feminine delicacy; to sacrifice good taste to fashion; or to forget that in the young, simplicity is the most pleasing of all adornments. It will show you very clearly, what the blindness of self-love too often conceals, that flatterers have no other aim than to create personal amusement at the expense of their silly dupes; and observing that their inordinate praises are invariably directed, not to piety, good sense, or domestic virtues, but to perishable external attractions, or the showy accomplishments which, brilliant as they seem, may hide a very uncultivated mind, you will own that, far from giving pleasure, they should rather produce disgust; far from raising a smile of satisfaction, they should rather excite a feeling of humiliation.

Oh! how fatal, how deplorable are the results of an inordinate love of the world, with its follies and false joys! The mind continually bent on frivolity, acquires in time a frivolous tone. That great, noble, exalted mind, created to mount on the wings of prayer and meditation, even to heaven; destined to know God, to think of God, to converse with God; to improve, and strengthen, and spiritualize its faculties by union with God; that favoured mind stoops at last so low, as to waste its glorious energies in devising expedients

for the perpetual renewal of exciting pleasure; and, in its degradation, it condescends to employ the petty resources of paltry vanity to secure a primary share in the hollow admiration and insipid flattery for which it pants, even while acknowledging their worthlessness, and despising their insincerity. The Christian who thus devotes to the world the heart made for God alone, must necessarily be indisposed for the discharge of her obligations to her Maker, as well as unfitted for the performance of her duties at home. She whose life is one perpetual round of dissipating amusements, and whose thoughts and conversation are engrossed by dress, fashion, and similar subjects, can have little relish for prayer; little facility for meditation; little capacity or inclination for entering into the recesses of her soul by a careful examination of conscience; little desire to undertake the preparation requisite for the sacraments. Neither can she feel anything but distaste for serious occupation, and weary disinclination for the quiet duties which demand her attention in the domestic circle.

Intent solely on seeking adulation abroad, she will take no pains to make herself amiable and useful and loved at home. Solicitous only for the approval of the world, she will care little to merit the approval of God. Anxious but for temporal advantages, she will forget the concerns

of eternity and the interests of her soul; but because, deluded by Satan's specious promises, she has preferred the service of the world to the service of God, prolonged as are excitements, multiplied as are pastimes, and varied as are amusements, her heart is empty, her mind listless, her life objectless, and even pleasure itself —the very pleasure so eagerly sought, so dearly loved—becomes at last a weary burden. Oh! how deplorable a conclusion to her early training in piety! How sad a termination to the holy projects of virtue, and strong resolutions of fidelity to God, which hallowed the days of her residence in the sanctuary, and accompanied her at her departure from it, as a beacon's light to warn her, and an angel's wing to shield her! "How is the gold become dim, and how is the finest colour changed!" (Lam. iv. 1.) Alas! the love of the world has imperceptibly been suffered to supplant the love of God; the love of pleasure has gradually been substituted for the love of duty; the spirit of the world has banished the spirit of Christ; the maxims of the world have obliterated the lessons of the Gospel; the example of the world has outweighed the pious counsels of the monitors of earlier days,—and thus it is that the gold has lost its lustre, and the colour its brilliancy, and that the heart formed

for heaven has become the miserable, degraded slave of earth.

It may be that so serious a view of the subject has not occurred to you before, and it may be, too, that the world looks to you just now too smiling and attractive, to admit of your realizing the possibility of danger in anything so bright, or connecting the idea of evil with anything so inviting. You simply take on trust the promises, which, never having tested, you have not yet learned to doubt, and believe, in your inexperience, that all is in reality what it seems, losing sight of the great fact, that that smiling countenance is but a painted mask, and that fascinating appearance a hollow show. But looking on the world in its true aspect, as the enemy of God—an enemy so odious, that Jesus, the very source and fountain of mercy, excluded it from his dying prayers—how will your ideas concerning it alter! How will you hate and dread it, and pray to be shielded from its many perils, and preserved from its many temptations! Seeing in it the disguise beneath which Satan lurks to spread his snares and carry on his machinations, hiding himself the while, lest his hideous presence should, if revealed, strike terror into his victims, how cautiously will you approach it, and how vigilantly will you watch for its hidden dangers! Considering it as the

great arena on which the infernal spirit wages his impious strife against heaven, how will you shudder at the thought of taking part in a combat, on the issue of which hangs your fate for eternity! Viewing it as intimately identified with the nearest and dearest interests of your inveterate foe, and therefore as your personal enemy, no less than the enemy of God, how will you tremble at the mere apprehension of falling into the hands of so powerful and so malignant an adversary, and how earnestly will you pray at your entrance into the world to be kept unspotted by its defilements, and unentangled by its snares!

The ocean on which you are going to embark is a very treacherous one—in its hours of calm, it sleeps so tranquilly beneath the breathless sky, its rest undisturbed even by a passing ripple, that to the uninitiated eye, it seems the very emblem of peace. But do not limit your observations to the glassy surface which looks so serenely beautiful in the reflected tints of the ethereal vault above; plunge into the deep; examine the frowning rocks; count, if you can, the hidden shoals that lie in stealthy wait for the ruin of the unwary; listen to the low moaning of the waves, the prelude of the coming storm, and filled with salutary alarm at the awful realities thus unexpectedly revealed, learn to form

an accurate estimate of the perils which await you, and henceforth to view the world, not in the false light of the imagination, but through the unerring medium of Faith, which, rectifying the erroneous impressions of sense, will elevate your hopes and views far beyond transient objects that fascinate only to betray.

In order to avoid the risks we have been considering, it is not necessary, as you are quite aware, to seclude yourself from society; this would, on the contrary, be reprehensible as a singularity; neither is it requisite to fly altogether from the world, which would be mere rashness, unless God pleased Himself to call you into the cloister. But you certainly are required by Him, who has given you His law as your guide, and will one day judge you on its observance, to seclude your heart from the world: "to use the world, as though you used it not;" to pass through it as a traveller who has not here a lasting city; to keep your affections disengaged from it; to beware of allowing its example to influence you, its spirit to guide you, or the poison of its maxims to glide into your soul. You are allowed to participate in its amusements, provided they are innocent in themselves, and consistent with the obligation of the condition in life assigned you by the Almighty, but only with moderation and in God's holy presence. You

are permitted to enjoy them, but never to let yourself be carried away by them; never to make them the end of existence; never to thirst for them with restless eagerness; never to let them interfere between you and your duty to God; never to suffer them to become an occasion of sin. You are allowed to dress in accordance with your position in life; but never with extravagance. You are allowed to conform to the usages of fashion; but never to encroach in the slightest degree on feminine modesty. You are allowed to relish cultivated society and agreeable conversation; but never to lend a willing ear to the syren voice of flattery; never to join in, or countenance detraction; never to lay aside that reserve of manner which should be the characteristic, as it is the safeguard, of the woman; never to let yourself be so far dazzled by brilliant exterior qualities, as to lose the capability of discriminating between appearance and reality; never to make acquaintances or form friendships without your parents' sanction; never to lose sight of the important fact, that an intimate associate, imbued either with a worldly spirit, or anti-Catholic principles, would be to you the most dangerous, the most fatal of tempters.

That salvation, and even exalted sanctity, are attainable in the world, none can for a moment doubt, knowing, as we do, that the life of the

world is, by God's own appointment, the ordinary destiny of His creatures. It is through intercourse with the world that men in general are to be saved; through the faithful discharge of duty in their various relations to it, that they are to be sanctified. The world does not, then, mean any particular place, for all parts of God's beautiful creation are good; it only means certain maxims at variance with the lessons of the Gospel; a certain spirit, opposed to the spirit of Christ; certain practices inconsistent with the baptismal engagements of a Christian. It is quite possible to live in the world without acting on its maxims, or imbibing its spirit, or pursuing its practices, as the example of the saints will show you, if you but study their lives. Live, then, in the world, if such be the will of the Almighty in your regard; for in the accomplishment of His holy will alone, is our sanctification; be happy to think that you can serve Him there very perfectly, and promote His glory very extensively. Live in the world, if God calls you to it; but never cease to hate, to dread, to shun its spirit. So long as you resist the influence of that spirit, so long are you safe, even though your destiny may summon you to the midst of the world, as heaven's ordinance summoned saints to wear coronets and fill thrones. If you are inviolably faithful to your fundamental resolution of

exactitude to the great duty of prayer, you will be comparatively safe amidst its dangers.

While at the call of duty, you occasionally mingle in its gay scenes, the virtue of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, at which you assisted in the morning, will still shed its lingering influence over you, to strengthen. The good thoughts suggested by your early meditation, will recur from time to time, to restrain. The pious emotions excited by the Rosary will arise again and again, to draw your mind and heart to heaven; and when you are in danger of being carried away by the pageants of earth, and forgetting the brighter land to which you tend, the remembrance of God's presence will be your defence; the arms of Mary, your fortress; the shadow of your angel's wings, your citadel; and thus secured, even the world itself cannot harm you; the contagion of vice cannot reach you; the wild waves of dissipation cannot engulf you; the vanities of earth cannot separate you from God; cannot sever your affections from the blessed home to come, where your heart reposes, because there rests your treasure.

CONCLUSION.

As a practical conclusion to this little work, nothing can perhaps be more useful than to refer you to the first fundamental principle of the spiritual life—the end of man's creation; for if thoroughly impressed with the importance of that vital principle, there will be little danger of your ever renouncing your allegiance to your Maker, to adopt the world's maxims as your code, or its example as your guide.

You were made by God, and therefore you belong to him absolutely, entirely, and in the minutest particular. The existence which he bestowed, he has preserved for many years, and continues still to preserve unceasingly from one moment to another; therefore you belong to Him always—in youth and in age, in every period of life, in every single separate instant that composes your existence. You are at all times subject to the high dominion of God, therefore amenable to his laws, dependent on his will, strictly bound to observe his precepts. At no moment, under no circumstance, can you cease to be the possession of God, or transfer to your-

self, or any other creature, his inalienable right over you. To do so, would be to abuse that noble gift of free will, which is well employed only as long as it tends with all its strength to the Creator.

To use your liberty in accordance with the designs of God, or pervert it to other ends, is perfectly at your option. Life and death are before you; a happy or a miserable eternity is offered you, and you are freely permitted to choose; but before you do so, pause to consider the consequences of the selection.

On one side are offered to you present gratifications; dissipating pleasures; the full, free indulgence of self-love with all its vicious propensities and morbid cravings;—a life of ease and indolence, and therefore a selfish, useless life; useless for God's glory, useless to your fellow creatures, most thoroughly useless to yourself,—consequently a direct and complete deviation from the end for which life was bestowed.

On the other side are the restraints which the practice of virtue necessarily entails; the warfare against nature which must be bravely sustained through life; the self-denial indispensable to the observance of God's commands; the sacrifices to duty inseparable from its exact fulfilment; the renunciation of all but innocent amusements; the invariable preference of God's

sovereign pleasure to the desires and demands of self-will; constant watchfulness over the mind; a constant guard over the heart; a life of active good works animated by charity, and regulated by the exigences of the particular condition allotted by Providence—a useful life—useful for God's glory, useful to your neighbour, most useful to yourself; a treasury of merits for eternity, and therefore a perfect fulfilment of the end of your creation.

Before you make your selection, you have still to consider that on the manner in which you fulfil your temporal destiny depend eternal results, for your end is two-fold—first, to serve God in this world; and, secondly, to possess him in the next. Your soul is immortal; it can never die; *never.* Through all the ages of eternity it will live. And what is eternity? Something that it utterly bewilders us to think of; something that perplexes, and entangles, and confuses our minds when we try to send them wandering far away, and farther through the interminable years. Can you fancy an ocean without a shore? or a sky without a horizon? No. Or a day without a night, or a night without a day dawn? No, again. We cannot picture to our imagination any space without a term; any extent without a boundary; any period without a limit. Still, let us endeavour to do so, and make use, for

this purpose, of one or two of the comparisons employed in meditations on eternity—that, for instance, of the arithmetical figures. Two such figures denote the period of the ordinary lives of men;—very few, indeed, exceed the age of 99; very few even reach it; those who do, are justly esteemed to have had an unusually long life. Now, look back to the beginning of time; cast a rapid glance over the memorable events which have marked the different epochs since; note the various empires which have risen and fallen; the innumerable revolutions which have changed the face of society; the moral regeneration of the world through the coming of Christ, and establishment of His church; the gradual discovery of new regions; the progress of civilization; the improvements in arts and learning. Pass in review the multitudes who have lived their little span of life, and then been swept away to make room for new generations, also destined soon to disappear and mingle their dust with that of their predecessors to the tomb. You easily conclude that a chain of history, reaching from the creation down to yourself, must be very lengthened indeed, and the origin of events so incalculably numerous, very remote. Yet four figures mark the duration of the world, with all its physical and moral revolutions; for, far back as seems the dawn of time, its date is

not yet of six thousand years past. Now, apply this reflection to the subject of our consideration. Fancy, not four figures, nor ten times the number, but a line extending all round the circumference of the globe. Let each figure in that line stand, not for a hundred years, or a thousand, but for millions and millions of ages, and even at that rate eternity will outmeasure them—outweigh them—exhaust them; and having exhausted them, even to the very last unit, will be as far from ending as it is to-day!

Picture to yourself, again, an ocean so vast as to enclose within its limits all the waters that now cover the surface of the earth, and imagine that, at the end of every million of years, one drop is withdrawn from the mighty deep;—even at that rate eternity will see the ocean drained, and be as far from ending then as it is to-day!

Think very seriously, very earnestly of this; plunge deeply into that shoreless ocean, and then say to yourself, "I am destined to live through those endless ages. My soul never can die; never can be annihilated. I know that interminable joys and agonies are equally the appendages of that mysterious eternity whose depths I have just tried to fathom. Shall I forfeit the bliss, and secure myself the woes, for the sake of the short-lived, perishable, insufficient enjoyments of time? Oh, no! surely no! 'What doth it profit a man,

if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?' (St. Matt. xvi. 26)." What does it avail the reprobate to have possessed all that men esteem and covet? All is gone now; the shadow has vanished; the phantom has glided away; time is over; eternity encompasses them; flames are their food and their drink; hideous demons their associates; the lacerating worm of conscience their ever-new tormentor. Oh! how small, how insignificant, how worthless seem to them the temporal interests for which they sacrificed the interests of eternity! If bitter, burning, scalding tears of agony and despair could atone for the fatal error, fully indeed would it be expiated. If wild, everlasting cries of anguish could recal the lost opportunity of making a holier and a wiser choice, that opportunity would not be lost irrecoverably, as it too surely is. But tears, and prayers, and groans are useless now. When the choice was given them, as at this moment it is given to you, they preferred the sinful pleasures of time to the joys of eternity; they loved darkness more than light, and are indebted only to their voluntary abuse of liberty for their present irremediably miserable lot.

These are the momentous truths which should guide you in your own selection between life and death; these the solid principles which should influence your judgments and regulate your

decisions. Form correct opinions on the relative importance of time and eternity, and for this end view all earthly things in that "wonderful light from the everlasting hills," (Ps. lxxv. 5), which alone can exhibit this transient scene in its true colours. Seen too near, it dazzles; seen through a false medium, it assumes a deceptive hue; but viewed from the far off summits of the eternal mountains, it wears its true aspect; its false glare dimmed by the distance; its gaudy gilding tarnished; its dimensions reduced to an all but invisible point. Accustom yourself to see it now, as you most assuredly will see it then, and there will be no danger of its engaging your thoughts and affections to the exclusion of other more important concerns.

As an encouragement to perseverance in the narrow, rugged way that leads to heaven, habituate yourself equally to view in the same clear light of eternity, the passing pains and privations attendant on the practice of virtue and the discharge of duty. Viewed likewise from "the everlasting hills," of how little moment will seem the self-renunciation, now perhaps so trying; the humiliations so galling; the contradictions so hard to bear; the sacrifices so difficult to make! When we have reached "the home of our eternity," will not our only regret be that we did not suffer more for God, while the time for suffering

meritoriously lasted? What a happiness *then* to have despised the pleasures of sin, and secured the immortal rewards of virtue! "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the mind of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him," (1 Cor. ii. 9); and when it is in your own power, through God's great mercy, to participate in the fulness of that incomprehensible and everlasting joy, would it not be worse than madness to cast it deliberately from you, and choose in exchange the multiplied agonies of hell! With what terrible force will your death bed bring this reflection before you, if you wait until then, to make it profitably! But do not wait; do not hesitate a moment; make a wise selection while you have the opportunity, and do it promptly, for delays are dangerous in the work of grace. The salvation of your immortal soul is the great question at issue. Can you do too much to place that beyond a doubt? Was any one ever known to regret in death the hours devoted to the service of God, or to wish that more time and energy had been lavished on the service of the world? Death will not be arrested by forgetfulness of it. It is a stern reality, not a theoretical speculation. Young as you are, it will come at last, and come perhaps, too, before your youthful days have departed from you. "You have not here a last-

ing city;" but are destined to inhabit one to come. Go up frequently, "in spirit, into the great and high mountain," whence you can see that "holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God," (Apoc. xxi. 10). It will never pass away, for its foundation is immoveable; its brightness will never fade, for "the glory of God hath enlightened it," (Ibid. 23); its happiness will never fail, for it flows from the exhaustless stream "which maketh glad the city of the Lord," (Ps. xlv. 5); its joys will never weary, for they are ever fresh as the flowers that bloom along the banks of "the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb," (Apoc. xxii. 1). "God is in the midst thereof," (Ps. xlv. 6), in all his beauty and glory; and in his presence millions of ages pass away like one short, sweet moment of unutterable bliss. That bliss must be purchased no doubt; but is it not worth purchasing, and shall the recompense be put in competition with the price? "And one of the ancients answered and said to me: These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence came they? And I said to him: My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me: These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. There-

fore they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of living waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," (Apoc. vii. 13-17). Oh! how truly may that "tribulation" be called "light and momentary," which "worketh for us exceedingly above measure, an eternal weight of glory!" (2 Cor. iv. 17.) "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works," (Apoc. xxii. 12). Soon will "the day" of eternity "break, and the shadows" of time "flee away" (Cant. ii. 17). "Grow not then weary of well doing," (2 Thes. iii. 13); "be but faithful unto death," (Apoc. ii. 10), and I will give thee the immortal "crown of justice, laid up for all who have loved," and prepared for "my coming," (2 Tim. iv. 8).

A. M. D. G.

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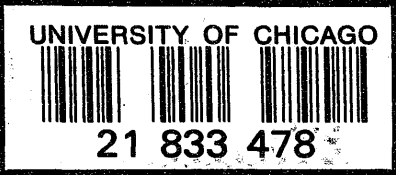
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